From Royal Page to Martyr!

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FROM

ROYAL PAGE

TO

MARTYR,

Y. M. C. ASSOCIATION PAGANERI.
பாகனேரி

THE BLESSED JOHN DE BRITTO

1647—1693.

PRESENTED BY
V. PR. PL. M. KASIVISVANATHAN
CHETTIAR TO
THIRUVALLUVAR LIBRARY, PAGANERI.

BY

HENRY DOERING, S. J.,

Archbishop-Bishop of Poona

with Illustrations and a Map.

Translated from the German.

B. X. FURTADO & SONS,

KALBADEVI—BOMBAY.

1245

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The little book* by the Most Revd. Dr. H. Doering, S. J., Archbishop-Bishop of Poona, is one of a series of short lives of Jesuits, who through their saintliness did distinguished work for the Church; hence, though the book conveys an adequate idea of the life of Blessed John de Britto, it is not meant to be an exhaustive account. In translating it, care has been taken to render the German narrative as closely as possible; here and there some alterations have been made; its illustrations are a new feature; they endeavour to bridge over the gulf of Time that lies between 1693 and the present; for, during the speeding away of centuries, Southern India has changed but little.

We are indebted to Father J. B. Winiger, S. J., for his assistance, especially in securing the illustrations under trying conditions of monsoon weather.

In Marava, the scene of the final, heroic labour on the part of Blessed John de Britto, the influence of the martyr is, in many a way, still exerted upon and acknowledged by Christian and heathen alike. By striving to make his life more known to English-speaking Catholics, we trust their prayer to him will further the spreading of the light of Faith amid the darkness of the shadow of eternal death, in which sit millions upon millions in India.

H. HENNESSY, S. J.

THE PRESBYTERY,
PANCHGANI,
14-9-33.

PRESENTED BY:
V. PR. PL. M.
KASIVISWANATHAN CHETTIAR
PAGANERI

* Von Edelknaben zum Märtyrer; Herder, Fribourg; 1920.

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FOREWORD

The following pages afford a brief sketch of the life, the labours and the death of Blessed John de Britto, a priest of the Society of Jesus and one of the foremost heralds of the Faith in India.

The very rare history of the life of the Blessed, written by Fernão, his own brother, forms the chief source of this little work[1].

Valuable profit was reaped from a perusal of the *Litterae Annuae* or Annual Letters sent by the Superiors in India to the General of the Order in Rome. Most of these letters, in so far as they bore reference to the Madura Mission, had been published by Father Bertrand[2].

Documents dealing with the beatification have also been made use of, and such letters, too, as were published in the 'Weltbott', the first publication in German in the 18th century on the Missions, and in the *Lettres édifiantes*, a collection of correspondence from the Missions. In addition to these, many hitherto unpublished letters and records in the possession of the Society of Jesus were made use of.

In the year 1853, there appeared in French a life of the Blessed John de Britto by Father Prat, S.J., which was translated into German by Dr. Bittner. Father Prat[3] was able to make use of the voluminous work of Father Franco, S. J., which was not available to us; it deals with the Jesuits, who were trained in the Novitiate at Lisbon.

In our days, despite the hardships of the times, interest in the Missions is so splendid! This sketch might, therefore, meet with particular welcome.

† HENRY DOERING, S. J.

St. Ignatius' College,

Valkenburg,

5th July 1920.

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(1) Historia do nascimento, vida e martyrio de Joao de Britto da Campanhia de Jesus, martyr da Asia e protomartyr da Missao de Madure; Coimbra, 1772.

(2) J. Bertrand, S. J., La Mission du Maduré d'apres des documents inédits Paris, 1850.

(3) Historie du bienheureux Jean de Britto......, Bruxelles, 1853.

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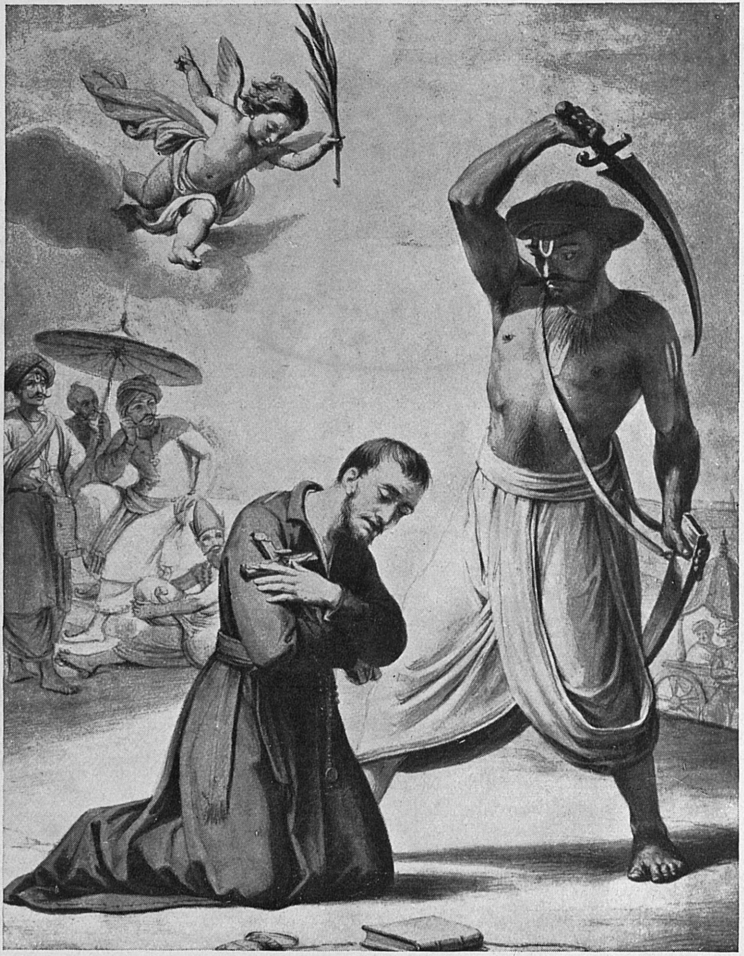

Father de Britto martyred at Oriyur, Southern India, 4th February, 1693.

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FIRST CHAPTER.

Ancestral House and Royal Court, 1647-1662.

Towards the close of the Middle Ages there bloomed for the little kingdom of Portugal a period of more than usual prosperity.

Conquests in Africa, expansion of trade to the most distant parts of the Orient and the founding of colonial establishments on the coasts of the Far East and on the islands of the Near East had brought vast treasures to the motherland and had strongly awakened the spirit of enterprise among the people. Along with explorers and traders there went forth brave apostles in large numbers and they made the places, where the Portuguese flag had been planted, the starting points for the spreading of the kingdom of Christ. With a generous spirit the kings of Portugal furthered missionary activity. But a decline set in when, in 1580, Portugal was linked to Spain and suffered the loss of her independence. The new Spanish Government was little interested in the colonies that it had taken over with Portugal and, hence, many of the Portuguese colonies in the East and West Indies were lost and fell to Holland. "In the country itself, traders wearied themselves away; labourers found no work; the noble, no occupation; the taxes were crushing; the viceroys carried on a despotic government"[1].

The general disturbances of conditions led in 1640 to a revolt against the Spanish rule. John, the Duke of Braganza, who had a right to claim the Portuguese throne, was approached by the great and noble of the country and urged to take the title of king and place himself at the head of the movement. Amidst the rejoicing of the people he entered the capital, Lisbon, and was crowned king there on the 15th of December, 1640.

Much did Spain strive, even during the reign of John's successors, to secure possession of Portugal again; but fruitlessly; the House of Braganza held the throne.

John the Fourth aided by his consort, Aloysia Guzman, laboured with prudence and kindness incessantly at the development of the country and of the colonies that still remained to him. Very close to his heart lay the further spreading of the true Faith in his possessions over seas.

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(1) Weiss, Weltgesichte IX, 3, Graz u. Leipzig 1895-, 381.

The Order of the Society of Jesus, which furnished the largest number of workers in the Missions and accomplished there more than was ordinary, enjoyed the special favour of the king[1]. At Villa Viçosa, the ancestral seat of his ducal House, John the Fourth had come to know the Society; for, in 1601 his father, Theodosius of Braganza, had established a house there for the Professed of the Order. Even after his accession to the throne, John supported the missionary enterprises of the Jesuits, and most energetically. "Through a royal grant for the future, and as long as the mission should need it, he assured the missionaries of that pecuniary assistance for their missions in India, China and Japan, which had already been guaranteed by previous kings but had been withheld by recent viceroys."[2].

In high esteem at Court and throughout the country stood the noble family of de Britto. From the close of the fifteenth century the family had rendered unfailing, loyal service at the Court of the Duke. What specially distinguished the family was its fortitude and chivalrous daring. A great grand-father of our Blessed, a Fernão de Britto, fought under the Duke in the army of King Sebastian against the Moors and fell fighting at the side of the king in the successful but bloody battle of Alçazar in 1578. In the defence of the fortress of Villa Viçosa, Christobal de Britto, a cousin of the Blessed, strove successfully against the Spaniards and took part in the victorious battle at Montes Claros in 1665; another Christobal, John's elder brother, had two years earlier, in 1663, lost his life in heroic battle against the Spaniards at Amerial and fell at the head of his own squadron. This outstanding trait of the de Britto, their chivalrous daring, we shall find was also strongly marked in John de Britto.

When in 1640, John, Duke of Braganza, was chosen king, his chamberlain, Fernão de Britto, accompanied him to Lisbon; and his younger brother, Salvador, the Lord Grand Master of the Horse, moved with the Court to the capital of the country.

Salvador was married to Donna Beatrix, of the old and noble family of Pereira. From the marriage sprang three sons and a daughter. Luiza Maria, the daughter, married Count Pinheiro. Christobal, who has already been mentioned, was the eldest

(1) From the year 1551 up to 1640, the Portuguese Province of the Order sent no less than 550 heralds of the Faith to India, China and Japan, and more than 150 to Brazil; see the lists by Fr. Franco in: Synopsis annalium Societatis Jesu in Lusitania ab anno 1540 ad annum 1725, Augustae Vindelicorum, 1726.

(2) Ibid. 314.

son. After his death his younger brother, Fernão, became the representative of the family; he was the second son and to him we are indebted for the life of his brother, John, written with touching affection. He produced it with the utmost care, falling back no less upon his own personal recollections than upon the archives in the houses of the Order at Rome and in Portugal.

John, the youngest son, was born at Lisbon on the first of March, 1647. Scarcely had he made his appearance in the world than he hovered between life and death, so that the bestowal of baptism could not be delayed; in fact, on the same day he received the sacrament as administered in case of need. After the danger was over, the ceremonies were performed on the 13th of March in the church of Saint Andrew.

Shortly after the birth of his youngest son, Salvador had to leave home. The king, as a reward for the services done to his House, had appointed him as viceroy over Brazil. He reached there but died in the year 1650 at Rio de Janeiro, far from his beloved family. This was a severe blow to Donna Beatrix. Upon her alone there now lay the responsibility for the education of her children. But she was noble in character. Of her Fernão bears witness that, throughout her life, she had distinguished herself by her strong faith and her Christian virtues; she had proved herself a mother worthy of a martyred son.[1]

With prudence and affection Donna Beatrix directed the early training of her children. To her motherly heart John was particularly dear; he was a gentle child, full of feeling yet strong of will and of a steady disposition. In him Fernão praises above all his noble and innocent heart; for all that was good his enthusiasm was keen. Already then his mother cherished the wish that her child would consecrate himself in an Order to the service of God.

Not for long was John to remain in his ancestral home. When hardly nine years old, he came, as a page, with his brothers to the royal Court. In 1653, Theodosius, the heir-apparent, died at the early age of sixteen. He was a gifted boy, as notably distinguished by his natural talents as by his piety and virtue. But the king's second son, later on Alfonso the Sixth, had quite early betrayed very evil tendencies. Wicked companions had ruled him and had drawn him into reckless ways, so much so that the king now seriously thought of barring his succession to the throne and had in

(1) Fernão de Britto, Historia do nascimento, vida e martyrio do veneravel P. João de Britto, 3.

view his youngest son, Pedro, as his successor. In consequence he wanted to bestow the utmost care upon his up-bringing. So he surrounded Pedro with a number of excellent pages, all about the same age and from the foremost families of the land and who with him should be educated at the royal palace. Among those summoned to the royal palace as pages were John de Britto and his two brothers. For John a new life now began. At the Portuguese royal palace propriety and sound morality prevailed on the whole; but, nevertheless, the pages had to see and to hear much that could work upon them perniciously. The distractions were many that could lead one away from earnest occupation; to a guileless boy there was wanting the eye and loving guidance of a mother. Yet to John life at Court brought no harm; innocent as he had been in his ancestral home and devout at prayer, so he remained; nor did his zeal in other religious observances than the ordinary ever flag; his quickness at learning and his diligence at study continued; but his earnestness and his modest manner would often displease his more frolicsome companions, and John had then to bear up with many a provoking and sharp remark. Against these petty vexations John set his patient seriousness and this earned for him the nickname of 'the martyr!' With Don Pedro, the Infanto, the pages most likely attended the college of St. Anthony, the great educational establishment in Lisbon conducted by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. After John had spent two years at Court serious illness befell him. Whether he was brought to his parental home for nursing or whether he remained in the palace, we do not know; in any case, his mother assisted her darling child with all her tender care and never left his bed-side. Among the Portuguese, Saint Francis Xavier already enjoyed high esteem. In their mutual prayer mother and son had recourse to him. To the saint the mother vowed that John, when well again, should wear for a year a habit such as was worn by members of the saint's Order.[1]

John recovered from his severe illness and attributed the sudden cure to the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier. From this time on and throughout the year he appeared, in the palace as

(1) Such vows were then not uncommon. P. Franco (Synopsis annalium S. J. in Lusitania 1540-1725, Aug. Vindelicorum 1726, p. 291) gives several instances; among them, that, in 1647, when the fourteen year old Infanto Don Alfonso lay seriously ill, his mother the queen and a relative of Saint Francis Borgia, entrusted her son to the saint and vowed Alfonso should wear for a year a habit, similar to the garb used by a Jesuit, if he should recover. The child regained his health and the vow was loyally fulfilled. Alfonso appeared in the garb then used by the Order. Immediately the ladies of the noble families of Lisbon dressed their little boys, the playmates of the Infanto, like the Jesuit, and the royal Court, adds P. Franco, was like a novitiate house of the Order.

well as at school, dressed in a black robe with a girdle and a biretta. Henceforth at Court he was only called 'apostolinho', the little apostle. In those days the Fathers of the Society of Jesus were by preference called apostles; was the name given to John a forecasting? From this time onwards the thought and desire to wear that robe for life seem slowly and imperceptibly to have ripened within his soul. Whenever he could do so unnoticed, he withdrew the more, to hold silent communication with his Lord in prayer. His modest demeanour grew greater; while deeper into his childlike heart sank love for his Lord and the yearning to live entirely for Him and to labour for Him in the religious state. Strong trust in the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier and a keen longing to emulate him took deeper and deeper root in his pure soul.

In the church of the house of the Professed of the Society of Jesus, which was dedicated to Saint Roque, there took place during Lent every year since 1609, the festival of the Forty Hours' Adoration. On the third day a procession was held, in which, as Father Franco relates[1], the king and the great nobles of the land bore the canopy, under which the priest with the Blessed Sacrament moved along. In the year 1659, the entire royal Court with its princes and its pages took part in the procession. John had to accompany the Infanto, Don Pedro. Clad in the garb of a Jesuit he went with the suite as far as the altar of the church, then withdrew under the pretext that he was not dressed as a page and betook himself to the sacristy. There he put on a mantle, took a lighted candle in his hand, and ranged himself among the novices, who stood prepared to join in the procession. During the course of the year he again resumed the apparel of a page but more lively than ever was the desire in his heart to consecrate himself entirely to God in the religious life. When he reached his fourteenth year, he made known his longing to Father Michael Tinoco, a man of tried prudence and of holiness, who at that time was at the head of the Trans-Tagus Province of the Order. To it the Jesuit establishment in Lisbon belonged. Father Tinoco had no hesitation in granting the youthful page his admittance into the Society; he, however, expressed the fear that his mother and the royal Court would raise objections and make difficulties.

John went first to his mother. According to the account given by his brother, Fernão, he spoke to her more or less as follows: "My mother and my lady! To thee I owe my life; thou hast presented me with it; but yet another benefit must I ascribe to

(1) Franco, Synopsis annalium, S. J., etc., p. 198.

thee, my vocation to the religious state. God has made use of thee to give me this vocation. For, when I was sick and without any hope to recover again, I turned to Saint Francis Xavier and besought him to obtain my health for me from God. My prayer was not heard. Then thou didst join thy prayer to mine, and didst make the promise to allow me to wear for a year the garb of the Order of the Society of Jesus; and at once I was cured. I wore the garb; there awoke within me the yearning to be obliged to wear it ever! This desire has remained within my heart; I have sought admission into the Order and have obtained it. For my vocation I am indebted to thee because it has its grounding in the loyal fulfilling of the vow that during my illness thou didst make to Saint Francis Xavier. I now request of thee thy permission. Francis Xavier calls me. It is just that I should follow his call. Share in my offering! Command me to bring it that I may unite the merit of my obedience to the surrender of myself!"[1].

Donna Beatrix was touched by these appealing words. She assured her darling child that she knew his vocation was a special favour obtained from God for him through the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier and that she would gladly make the sacrifice of him to God; she had for long cherished the wish that he would dedicate himself to the religious state but she had only feared his health was not robust enough to stand the long studies and the heavy labours that he, as a Jesuit, would have to undertake. John, however, knew how to remove all her anxiety. "Be at peace, mother," he said, "the Lord calls me; I must obey; let us leave it to Him to give me the strength I should be in need of to do all my duties in the new state, He draws me to."

Now the consent of the royal family was still to be obtained. But till the end of the year 1662, John withheld disclosure. In the meanwhile he stayed at the Court of the Infanto and eagerly pursued his studies.

The queen-mother, who since the death of King John the Fourth and until recently had carried on the regency on behalf of her elder son, the then King Alfonso, found it very painful that her favourite child, Don Pedro, should be deprived of the wholesome influence that the young de Britto had exercised over him. But above all was it hard for the noble-minded Don Pedro to separate himself from him, who of all his playmates was deepest in his friendship. Mother and son strove to bring John to change his purpose; but

(1) Fernão de Britto etc., 11.

he did not falter. With ready speech he managed to plead his cause so well that the queen and Don Pedro withdrew their opposition.

On the 17th of December 1662, with touching affection and child-like tenderness John took leave of his mother and went to the Novitiate in Lisbon. His brothers, Christobal and Fernão, accompanied him as far as the door of the Novitiate.

With his heart angelically pure John had entered into the Order. Along with this priceless gift he brought a disposition highly courageous and ready for any sacrifice. From such a novice the Order could expect much; for, in him were fulfilled all the preliminary conditions necessary for great progress and true saintliness.

SECOND CHAPTER.

For Loyola's Banner, 1662-73.

It was only in the year 1619 that the Novitiate of the Portuguese Province of the Order found a fixed home in Lisbon. Till then the novices had been lodged in the houses of studies, either at Evora or at Coimbra. At the time of John's entrance, an Irishman, Father Frank Vitters, held the post of Novice-master and was Rector of the house as well; he was a man of deep virtue and of unusual prudence, entirely suited to introduce the young recruits of the Order to the religious life. With a joyous heart John entered upon the first trial, which it is customary to go through before receiving the cassock. Through the Spiritual Exercises, which he performed at that time, he cleansed his soul from the stains that still clung to it, nourished his zeal upon the life and sufferings of the Saviour and strengthened his vocation. He was quite happy when on Christmas day he was allowed to wear the cassock and became associated with the band of novices. His aim was to be a good and holy religious. As a shining example there stood before the eyes of his soul, Saint Francis Xavier, whom all through his life he had honoured. Like him he too wished to become an apostle to the heathen, filled with zeal for souls and full of saintliness. Already then his thoughts and desires went out to the Missions among the people of pagan countries.

In the Novitiate a beautiful, child-like custom was observed. All the novices were wont to gather at Christmastide before a crib and each one laid a little note there, on which he had written what he wished in particular from the Child Jesus. We do not know what the little note of our novice contained; but we are not likely to err if we assume that he asked from our Lord the true spirit of an apostle. On the outer side of the note he wrote the words: 'Porte a missão do Japão: '(1) or, according to Father Franco (2): 'Portorium Japonia': this meant commission money for the note, in which he would fain request from the Child Jesus the mission of Japan. (3).

Perhaps he asked for this Mission because in Japan he hoped to find sooner than anywhere else the opportunity of receiving a martyr's crown.

(1) Fernão de Britto: Historia do nascimento etc. 18;
(2) Franco, Annus gloriosus Societatis Jesu in Lusitania, Viennae, 1720.
(3) This seems correct. It cannot mean, as Father Prat says: 'through the mission from Japan.' (Histoire du Bienheureux Jean de Britto, Bruxelles, 1853.)

The practices and the test of the two years of Novitiate now began and have this purpose in view that the heart should be freed more and more from ill-regulated love of the world and of self and that the whole will should tend towards God and His glory. As he himself admitted, John did not begin from the very beginning; he had already gone through a good part of the Novitiate at the Court of the Infanto; many an opportunity of self-conquest and of sacrifice had come to him there. In the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus the custom was observed at that time, as it is still observed in many places, that for a while the novices should in turn devote themselves to the sick in a hospital. This afforded many an occasion of practising patience and mortification. His turn also came to the former royal page. Very surly and irritable did the patient, whose nursing was entrusted to John, show himself to be; no one could satisfy him; every kind act was rewarded with reproach and insult; despite all, John always treated him with the same kindness. This laid siege to his hard heart; he grew manageable; he grew patient; with tears in his eyes he finally begged for forgiveness.

In the Novitiate, John served the sick with joy. One day, the Infanto, Don Pedro, visited the Novitiate mainly to speak to his old playmate. For long the latter could not be found; at length he was discovered at the bed-side of a servant of the house, whose nursing with the consent of his Novice-master he had undertaken. John came to the parlour where Don Pedro awaited him. The Prince was very edified when he heard where the novice had been found and said: "I rejoice that thou art so zealously active in the service of thy Master; He will give thee surely a much greater reward than thou couldst have ever expected if thou hadst remained in my service!"[1]

The two years of testing came to an end. As a novice, John had proved himself true. Full of praise for him, the Novice-master could say that John's fervour and progress had been of edification and of example to all; in spite of his youth, he had shown such maturity that he could have been a teacher in the spiritual life. At the close of the two years of Noviceship, John entirely dedicated himself through the vows to God and his vocation.

There now followed long years of earnest study. By their means solid foundation must be laid for future apostolic activity.

(1) J. Bertrand, S. J., La Mission du Maduré, 1, Paris, 1850, p. 409.

At first John, as a Scholastic[1], was sent to Evora, a small University town that lay to the east of Lisbon and in the south-western part of Portugal. There he devoted himself to the study of classic literature and of rhetoric. Whether it was because he gave himself too strenuously to study or that the inland nature of the climate suited him less, he fell ill and had to interrupt his studies. Hardly well again, he began to work as before; but he had relied too much upon his powers. Serious symptoms of lung trouble appeared. It was hoped the climate of Coimbra, another University town on the sea-side, would be more suitable. Towards the end of the year 1666, he travelled thither. At Coimbra he began his philosophical studies and pursued them with the best of results to the end. Later on, in 1667, information sent to the General of the Order in Rome praised in John de Britto "an extraordinarily gifted talent" and prominently brought to notice that he had distinguished himself in Philosophy. Amidst all this success he always remained humble and unassuming. On a certain day he had to appear in a public disputation on a philosophical matter and acquitted himself of his task in a most praiseworthy manner. His mother congratulated him but he answered: "Out of love for me thou judgest the weak attempt of a beginner forbearingly; else wouldst thou hardly praise me."

In Evora and in Coimbra his yearning to work and to die for our Lord grew still stronger. This ought not to be wondered at; for, to his Brethren in the colleges there, Father Balthasar da Costa, one of the most prominent missionaries of the Malabar Province, had repeatedly written from Madura and in enthusiastic language had invited them to apply for hard but meritorious cooperation with him in the Madura Mission. There is extant a letter written in the year 1646, and hitherto unpublished, in which the missionary expresses the needs of the Mission and its dearth of labourers and addresses to all a burning appeal: "It should not, however, be said", so it declares at the end, "that this splendid Mission went to ruin because no apostles could be found who would undertake its severe labour. That this Mission is difficult and calls for sacrifice should rather be a motive for many to place themselves at the disposal of the Superiors for the Mission. Here the talents, that God has given one, can be put to best account. They are not buried; no, for here the more they recede from the eyes of men, the more brilliantly do they shine before God. Does not the gloom of shade permit delicate tints of colour to come out better? Does

(1) The young members of the Society are so named so long as they have not completed their full course of study.

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not darkness but heighten the brilliancy of the stars? Yes, I know I need only say to my Brethren we are in want of labourers and your courage awakens readily, your hearts beat more warmly! No, my Brethren cannot hold themselves back but filled with magnanimous zeal they will write with their own blood to the Superiors to be allowed to depart! One of our Brethren here, the last who died, Peter de Basto, shortly before his death called the Mission of Madura a second Japan: streams of blood would flow here! Among my Brethren are many, who yearn for this, to yield their lives for Christ! Let them come and help to carry on what we have begun!"

In the year 1653, Father Balthasar da Costa sent a fresh, long letter to the Fathers and Brothers in the colleges of Coimbra and Evora[1]. He does not hide the trials, to which a missionary must submit himself; the inconveniences are described that the hot climate causes Europeans; adaptation to the food and to the way of living asks for sacrifice; and the grinding toil of a missionary amid war and persecution. But he was aware that all this would not scare his Brethren away from an apostolic call; they love the Saviour and love souls. Then he gives a survey of the Mission's work and of its success and also mentions the consolations, with which the Lord often visited His true workers. These letters were not consigned to oblivion at Coimbra and Evora; they were read again and again. What wonder, then, if every year not only young Scholastics but elderly Fathers, who taught and preached in the homeland, spurred by enthusiasm made their way to the Superiors and begged earnestly to be allowed to go to the Mission of Madura!

In the year 1668, John de Britto believed that the time had come when his wishes in the form of a petition should be laid before the Father General. On the 19th of November, to Father Paul Oliva, the General of the Order, he wrote as follows: "Through the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier I was freed from a severe illness; I was then received into the Society. That was not, however, enough for Saint Xavier; he obtained for me a further, a greater grace: the longing to devote to the Indian Mission the life, which his intercession had preserved for me. It is true, for long I bore this wish silently within my heart; I had not then as yet begun my philosophical studies; I now believe I have so far progressed therein that it would suffice for the work in that country. I pray, therefore, and beseech Your Paternity, as pressingly as I can, to permit me to follow the call of Saint Xavier. The thought does not leave me that, as Saint Xavier procured my health for me, so now he

1 J. Bertrand, S. J., La Mission du Maduré, iii, 1.

opens to me the straight road to bliss. By the wounds of Christ and the services rendered by Saint Xavier, and for the sake of the greater glory of God, whose furtherance is most of all nearest to your heart, most earnestly do I pray for the favour to be permitted to go to the Indian Mission. I beg your blessing and with my whole heart commend myself to your prayers. Your unworthy son in Christ........"[1]

Not long after, on the 5th of March, 1669, he again wrote to the Father General: "Your Paternity will not take it amiss if I write to you again. For so vehement is the longing, that presses me day and night, to go to India to devote myself there for the salvation of souls that, unless Your Paternity ordered otherwise, I would assuredly, on as many days as were allowed me, beg this permission from Your Paternity. The grounds, that urge me to ask for that mission, I have already laid before you in another letter; I leave them aside now; I would offend against the common welfare of the Society were I to trespass upon your time with lengthy details. The ardent zeal for souls, which I love in Your Paternity, bids me to hope much from Your Paternity's goodness. To your blessing I commend myself urgently.

Your Paternity's most lowly son,
JOHN DE BRITTO."

Soon after this second letter he received a reply from Father Oliva. The latter expressed his joy over the generous disposition that revealed itself in the letter; John should foster it and keep it living; as to what concerned the wish of his heart, he might so hope as to see it fulfilled on the next occasion; in the meanwhile he should complete his studies and, through fervent striving after virtue, prepare himself for an apostolic career.[2] But his hope was not to reach fulfilment so rapidly. After his philosophical studies had been brought to a close, he had to go from Coimbra to Lisbon and was appointed to teach in the college of St. Antony. Obediently he carried out the order and with beneficial results.

During this time Father da Costa came to Lisbon. The Provincial Congregation of the Malabar Province had appointed him as its Procurator in 1669. As such he had to set out for Portugal and Rome to arrange important matters of concern to the Mission.

[1] See translation into Italian by G. Boero S. J., Vita del Beato Giovanni de Britto, Roma, 1853, 21, 22. Also facsimile of second letter in the English translation of Fernão's book; Dom Bosco Press, Tanjore, 1932.

[2] Ibid. 22.

These had to be settled with the civil authorities as well as with the Superiors of the Order. At the same time it lay with him to win recruits for the Mission from the various houses of the Order. Probably, Father da Costa left India in 1670 and reached Lisbon towards the end of the same year.

John de Britto was one of the first, who offered himself and all his energies for the Madura Mission. His poor health as a Scholastic could and did rightly give rise to hesitation; but Father da Costa had not been stronger either; nevertheless, since 1635, he had laboured strenuously and uninterruptedly in the Mission. When Father da Costa saw the burning desire of John de Britto to go to India and grew convinced the finger of God could be perceived in that calling, he gladly declared himself ready to take the young religious back with him, in 1673, to the Mission of Madura; at the same time he promised that not only would he support the entreaty, John had already made to the General, but would also intercede with the General on his behalf.

After a few months instructions from Rome reached the Provincial, Father Manuel Monteiro, that John de Britto should be informed that he was destined for India and should hold himself in readiness for the departure thither. According to the custom the letter, which contained such instructions, was read out in the domestic chapel and in the presence of all the members of the community. Many an older religious may have believed the young Scholastic was not physically fit to endure the hardships of a long sea voyage much less the severe life of the Mission. But John trusted in Saint Francis Xavier, who had called him to the Mission, and thanked God that his prayer had been heard. So, very soon after, in the year 1671, he had to begin the study of Theology and to prepare himself to receive Holy Orders. When he received the priesthood, we find nowhere recorded. But it is likely he was ordained in the beginning of 1673, not long before his departure for India.

To his mother John had given no intimation of the decision which the General had taken; it could not, however, long remain secret that he would leave with Father da Costa; in fact, at Court and in the city it was openly spoken of. Quite unexpectedly the news reached Donna Beatrix; all the heavier was the blow to the heart of that gentle, loving mother. She decided to do all she could to have the decision reversed. First she called upon the Provincial and besought him to desist from carrying out the deci-

sion ; she would never find herself able to acquiesce in the thought of for ever losing her youngest, the most beloved son of all. Father Monteiro replied he was quite powerless to alter any thing in the matter ; with great definiteness the Father General had ordered the departure and in that he could change nothing.

With tearful entreaty the distressed mother now endeavoured to influence John. To him she recalled that, thirteen years ago, she had agreed to his wishes and had permitted him to enter the Order ; but to his present resolve she would never yield her consent. His choice may have sprung from burning zeal and from heroic virtue but a son had also to think of his aged mother. It struck at her heart and so deeply indeed that she would not be able to survive the separation. As many others, so could he work for the salvation of souls in Portugal ; it was not necessary to leave the Fatherland ; well ordered love went surely first to those, who stood nearest to us. These words of a mother made their impression upon the heart of her son ; he was deeply affected ; it grew difficult for him to retain his self-po session. But he explained to her that his resolve was unalterable.

Donna Beatrix then strove to achieve her purpose through the king and through the Papal Nuncio to the Court of Portugal. After she had appealed to King Pedro, he requested the friend of his boyhood to come to him ; he besought him to stay but could not make him waver in his decision. At that time the Papal Nuncio was Monsignor Francis Ravissa. At the most urgent request of Donna Beatrix he wrote to the Provincial and demanded in all earnestness that the granted permission should be revoked. Taken aback at this unexpected intervention of the Papal Nuncio, Father Monteiro was at a loss how to help himself out of the difficulty. He went to John de Britto and showed him the letter and said it had come so far that it still seemed the will of God that he should remain in Portugal. He, however, would neither give command nor counsel in the matter and would leave all to John's prudence. John answered he was prepared to reply to the letter personally, and even by word of mouth if the Provincial would take him to the Nuncio.

So it was done. The young religious frankly informed the Nuncio that his superiors were not sending him to India ; they only conceded the permission that he should go there. It was another, namely God Himself, Who was sending him. "The same God," he added, "had called me from the world to the Order, from bad to good ; He now calls me from Portugal to India, from

good to better. My going to India might be for me the only way that should lead me to Heaven. If I do not go, it may mean as much, perhaps, as that my salvation be imperilled. For, just as I have once to render an account of the sins I have committed, so must I also answer for the graces I should have left unused. Clearly do I recognise it is the will of God that I devote myself to the conversion of infidels. If I do not follow His call, I challenge the sternness of His justice. I must obey the voice of God. Whoever hinders me therein and is thus guilty that many souls remain deprived of the light of the Gospel, has his conscience heavily laden. So long as I live, I will set all in motion to succeed in my purpose ! "

Astonished at the decisiveness of the language yet edified by the zeal of the young religious, the Nuncio answered : "I wrote my letter at the request of a highly respectable lady. I now see your call comes from God. I must admire your heroic decision and glowing zeal and will certainly do nothing to hinder the fulfilling of the will of God."

Even now Donna Beatrix was not satisfied. She came to the Professed house and, in case her son should remain in Portugal, offered to send the house a considerable sum of money. Of course her proposal could not be entertained. She had to submit to the design of God. But up to the day of his departure she was able to see her son frequently. He contrived to reconcile her gradually to the thought of separation and to restore to her again her peace of mind.

Battling, hard wrestling were left unspared the young religious, the future missionary ! But his magnanimous fortitude, steeled by his love for the Saviour, was a match for all difficulties ; triumphantly he prevailed over them and, if heavier sacrifices and struggles were yet to come, he was equipped. John would face and overcome them !

THIRD CHAPTER·

To India, 1673.

Usually the royal ships, upon which missionaries made the voyage, left for India on the 25th of March; but it would happen that, for special reasons, this day would not be chosen.[1] So it was in 1763; the day settled for the departure was the 15th of March. Father Claudius Damey, a French missionary, who made the voyage on the same ship as Father de Britto, expressly says so in a letter[2] still unpublished and sent on the 8th of September, a few days after the arrival at Goa, to Father Oliva, the General of the Order: "On the 15th of March, we, seventeen men, healthy and cheerful, went on board the 'navis praetoria,' that is to say the ship in supreme command and, after a voyage of almost six months, ran into the harbour of Goa on the 4th of September."

Twenty-five courageous apostles, among them a good number of Scholastics who would complete their studies in Goa, prepared themselves under the leadership of two experienced missionaries, Father da Costa and Father Prosper Intorcetta, for the distant, uncomfortable and perilous voyage. On the day of departure the missionaries in a last audience took farewell of the king and queen. This was a duty of gratefulness towards the king and queen who had always shown themselves to be great benefactors of the Missions. In the church of the college of St. Antony, all assembled on the 15th of March. The missionaries first knelt before the altar of the Mother of God and then before the altar of Saint Francis Xavier, to place their voyage under the protection of these powerful patrons. From there they moved in procession towards the river Tagus and to the anchorage of the ships. In front walked the students of the college, then the Brethren of the Society and behind them the missionaries, each with a member of the Order on either side and each with a cross hung around his neck. A large throng of people crowded round and with loud acclamations wished them a safe voyage. Among the missionaries one sought in vain for Father de Britto; he was already aboard ship and awaited his fellow-Jesuits there. On the day before, he had visited his mother for the last time and had consoled her in her sorrow; but he had bidden her no final good-bye. So, on the day of departure he went before the others on board aship and from there wrote a few heartfelt words of farewell to her.

[1] The boat, upon which Father Fridely left in 1704, departed from Lisbon on the 8th of April; that, on which Father Laimbeckhoven made the voyage in 1736, sailed on the 25th of April. See 'Weltbott' Nr. 116 u. 555.

[2] In possession of the Order.

For the voyage two royal ships lay in the Tagus, the leading one called the Capitana or navis praetoria because she held the supreme command on board, and the Admiral's ship that was known as the Almiranta or Almiravia. Between the two ships the missionaries divided their number as follows: those destined for India, among whom were Father de Britto and the Superior, Father da Costa, took the leading ship; the remaining eight, who should voyage from Goa farther on to China, embarked on the Admiral's ship. On the leading vessel, besides the Jesuit missionaries, some Dominicans also found accommodation. The officer in supreme command was, as Father Damey mentions in his letter, a young man of tried virtue and prudence.

The Portuguese ships, that in those days voyaged to India, were large sailing-vessels with three or four or five masts and were very enduring. Often they had several hundred men on board. The stern or poop bore a large figure, generally that of a saint, from whom the ship took her name; there the national flag was also fastened; but the ships' own flag would, in the Capitana, be hoisted only on the main mast; while, in the Admiral's ship, it would float from one of the other masts. At the stern was a large helm that, with the help of a strong rope running round a wheel or windlass, was moved to and fro. On the farther opposite side, a heavy anchor hung from the prow. Generally several spare anchors were carried; for not seldom did the cables snap in stormy weather; then a new anchor had to be at-hand at-once. In the hold of the ship and along both sides, cabins and wooden partitions were set up, one above the other, usually in two storeys or floors; in the upper storey, the captain and officers stayed; in the lower, marines, the ship's crew and ordinary passengers found accommodation. Provision stores were also piled up there. Above these cabins lay a deck that for safety's sake was surrounded by a railing. At the stern there were also some cabins, one above the other, and occupying the whole breadth of the ship; they had several windows at the back. The lowest of these cabins was generally called the room of St. Barbara; it served also as lodgings for the subordinate officials of the ship and as a store for lumber. The highest was smaller than the middle cabin and had windows also on the sides and a door that led out on to a gallery. Both in the middle and the highest cabins passengers of better standing were accommodated; otherwise, they were used by the captain and superior officers. Above these cabins stood a deck encircled by a fine railing and named the Campania. Usually one or two of these cabins were engaged by missionaries, and on Portuguese ships they had to

make their own arrangements for their sustenance during the voyage ; they had to take provisions and drinking-water with them from Lisbon[1]. The narrowness of space and the length of the trip made the voyage to India one of utmost sacrifice to them. If storms arose that tossed the helpless vessels to and fro ; or calm befell them in the hot, tropical zone ; or dangerous fever occurred ; or contagious disease spread : then from all sides extraordinary demands were made upon the courage and endurance of these heralds of the Faith !

On this occasion both the ships sailed down the Tagus with a very favourable wind and soon lost sight of the harbour of Lisbon as they went out to sea. Their course led southwards. Without mishap they passed by the Canary Islands and drew towards the Equator. From the outset the Fathers sought to make themselves as useful as possible. Thrice during the week instruction in religion was given to the crew ; on every Saturday, after the chanting of the litany of the Mother of God, one of the missionaries gave a short instruction on our Lady and added with suitable application to their circumstances an example of her help. No doubt Father de Britto, one of the four Portuguese Fathers on board, took a large share in this work of preaching and instructing. Direct spiritual ministering to the sick and dying lay, it would seem, in the hands of Father Damey. In his letter, which we have mentioned already, he says the ship's chaplain, a Franciscan, died soon after the departure. So he took over his duties and fulfilled them till, towards the end of the voyage, he himself fell ill. To almost all the dying, over fifty in number, he had rendered the last consolations of the Church ; to most of those, who were sick during the voyage, he had administered the holy sacraments.

When the ships approached the Equator, a calm befell them, which lasted seven weeks. Not the faintest breeze arose ; the sails hung down listlessly ; and scorching heat, that hardly lessened even of an evening, beat fiercely down upon the ships. At the present day, a voyage through the Red Sea in July, when the winds blow parallel to the ship, is horrible enough ; much more depressing and unbearable, however, must the heat be in a calm at the Equator.

[1] The cost was very high. When Father Laimbeckhoven voyaged to Goa in 1736, nine missionaries shared a cabin, for which they paid 2500 gulden or more than 600 pounds sterling to-day. To Father Fridely, who made the same voyage in 1704, the officer, in supreme command, for 600 gulden allotted the Father half of the cabin officially reserved for himself. "In the narrow cabin, our store of oil, of water, of fish, flesh and wood, and of whatever else was needed, had somehow to be piled up, so that this corner stood for our church, sacristy, dining-room, bed-chamber, cellar and warehouse." See Weltbott, Nr. 555 ; 116.

While the ships floated helplessly on the placid waters, a dangerous fever broke out. It gained ground rapidly and soon became a raging epidemic. Father Tanaille, an Italian, was the first missionary to be fatally attacked ; shortly after his death, Father da Costa, who was to have introduced Father de Britto to his work in the Madura Mission, succumbed to the fever on the 21st of April; after him, and within a few weeks, three young Scholastics also died on the same ship ; during that time, seven on the Admiral's ship fell victims to the disease. Among these was Father Amrhin, a member of the Upper German Province of the Order. Among the crews the epidemic raged in a terrible manner. Throughout this period of misery, the Religious, who were spared and were not otherwise claimed by the work of spiritual ministration, were zealously at pains to serve the sick and to nurse them.

Father de Britto also fell ill ; he soon recovered, however, and did all that lay within his power to give relief to the many, who were suffering. Through his never failing, resourceful sympathy, he earned for himself, as the Acts of his Beatification testify, the surname of the 'new Xavier'. When the sickness had reached its height and the calm still continued, Father de Britto made a proposal that was accepted and carried out with fervour by all. It was a novena to be made publicly in honour of Saint Francis Xavier to obtain deliverance through his intercession. From his own experience Father de Britto knew the power of the saint's intercession and had firm trust in his help. As far as was possible, the captain and all the crew took part with equal fervour in the devotion. This faith on board aship was not disappointed. Soon the calm ended, the ships continued their voyage, and the pestilential sickness ceased. But another severe trial awaited them. They drew to the headland of the Cape of Good Hope, where heavy storms rage frequently ; for this reason it was much feared by sea-farers ; many a ship had met with her wreck there. On this occasion, too, the two ships rode into so terrific a storm that all on board were driven to despair of any escape. For days together the voyagers fought against the lashed sea. At the suggestion of Father de Britto, all again took refuge in Saint Francis Xavier. Their confidence in the apostle of India was to be visibly rewarded. Almost abruptly the violence of the storm ceased ; the ships were saved. The rest of the voyage passed happily away. Cases of sickness occurred, however. For instance, the German missionary, Father Aigenler, lay prostrate for weeks and died on the 16th of August, only a few days before the coast of India rose into view ; but sickness in an epidemic form appeared no more.

On the 4th of September, the harbour of Goa was finally reached. Immediately the cannon of Fort St. Aguada boomed the signal that the royal ships had arrived. The harbour of Goa was esteemed as one of the finest of Asia; the river, that separates the island of Goa in the north from the mainland of Bardez, widens more and more into a calm and safe haven; over it the storms of the sea do not sweep; and it affords place enough for a large number of ships. At its farthest entrance there lay, as a defence, well-built fortifications. On the mainland was the stronghold of Aguada and on the island of Goa, the fortress of Gabo.

On the 5th of September, the newly arrived missionaries were very heartily greeted by a party of their Brethren in religion. On the news of the arrival of the vessels, the Superior and Fathers of the college and of the Professed house of Goa, accompanied by choristers, musicians and a number of pupils, sailed out on several boats to the ships in the harbour to offer their warm welcome to their Brethren and to escort them to the city of Goa.

Up the river it was a slow voyage, past rich rice fields, gardens and green palm-groves sheltering hidden hamlets. At-lengththe city was reached on the morning of the 6th of September. Atthat time Goa was at the height of its glory though, here and there, signs of decay made themselves noticeable. It was particularly rich in splendid churches, palaces and cloisters. Seven religious Orders had their establishments there. In and near the city the Society of Jesus occupied three separate houses; a fourth, the Novitiate, was on a neighbouring island called Choraum. Westwards from the city, in a healthy locality and on a moderately sized knoll, the great college of St. Paul arose; it was sometimes called St. Roque's and in it youth were educated in higher studies. There, too, Jesuit Scholastics went through their courses in Philosophy and Theology. On the south-eastern side of the city stood the old college of St. Paul of the Seminary of Holy Faith; this was the first house that had been made over to Saint Francis Xavier after his arrival in India. At the time when Father de Britto landed, only a few Fathers dwelt there. In the centre, between the new and the old colleges of St. Paul, was the professed house with the famous church known as 'Bom Jesu'. This church sheltered already then the precious treasure that it guards even to this day, the body of Saint Francis Xavier, the great apostle of India. No sooner after their arrival Father de Britto and the other missionaries paid a visit to the shrine in this church. Strong must the impulse have been within the soul of Father de Britto to express his gratitude to the saint, whom he revered in so trustful and childlike a manner; with his vocation and

with other decisive happenings in his life Father de Britto realised how intimately Saint Francis was associated, and he now longed to recommend to the saint the whole course of his future as a missionary to the heathen.

Downward from the knoll, on which the college of St. Paul was situated, the way led through between the cloister of St. Monica on the one hand and the cloister of St. John on the other; then it led onwards, beyond the bazaar or market-place, to the beautiful church of 'Bom Jesu'. From the church-like sacristy, whose walls even now are adorned by superb paintings, a pious pilgrim enters the chapel from the epistle side; this is separated from the middle aisle by a grating. The present costly tomb in the chapel was not erected at that time; it is a gift from a Duke of Tuscany but arrived from Florence only after the year 1695. With a sub-structure of stone it consists of a silver shrine adorned with thirty-two reliefs wrought with marvellous delicacy; these pictures place before one remarkable events in the life of the saint. The shrine is also richly embellished with flowers of gold and with precious stones. Interiorly it is bedecked with golden damask and studded with precious stones in the form of small stars. Within the silver shrine, there stands another of clear crystal, and in this rests the undecomposed body of the saint, clad in a chasuble of red silk strewn with pearls.

What feelings must have surged within our young missionary as he knelt in devout prayer before the tomb of his favourite saint! He no doubt renewed his resolution to be true to his vocation and to labour until death for the conversion of the infidel; and to this resolution he assuredly added the fervent prayer that Saint Francis would obtain for him from God the grace of a martyr's death, as the crowning of his apostolic career.

Usually fresh arrivals in the Mission were afforded a short respite, a week or more, to recover in quietness from the hardships of the long sea-voyage and from the mental suffering that the loss of many fellow-companions on the high seas naturally caused. From numerous accounts at-hand we learn that they took this rest either in the college of Saint Paul or in that of Rachol situated to the south of Goa, or went to the parishes within the district of Salsette and witnessed with edification the various labours of their Brethren, their zeal and their success.

At the close of this period of repose, the duty fell to Father de Britto of resuming his interrupted study of Theology and of bringing it to conclusion before he could leave for what his heart yearned,

the Mission of Madura. Probably he lived in the college of St. Paul, where the best means of continuing his theological studies lay at his disposal. This study in a tropical moist climate, to which he was wholly unaccustomed, must have proved very trying to him. His Superiors allowed him to prepare immediately for the final examination, with which the studies in the Jesuit Order are concluded. Gladly would the young priest have laboured with others in the care of souls; but this zeal had to be placed under restraint if his studies were not to suffer harm. After four or five months, he offered himself for examination over the whole course of Philosophy and of Theology, and went through it with such success that his Superiors thought of applying him to the teaching of Philosophy.

There now remained the last probation, which completes the years of training in the Order. According to the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, the young Religious, after the conclusion of their studies, withdraw for a year into the seclusion of a second Novitiate, there to recover whatever they during the long time given to study may have lost of zeal in striving after perfection, and to permeate themselves anew, and thoroughly, with supernatural views and principles. Out of the last probation, known as the Tertianship, a Religious should come forth as a truly spiritual man armed for and steeled against adversity, or as an instrument fitted for and freed from every hindrance in the working out of his vocation. In those days when the number of missionaries counted so few, the last probation was frequently shortened and its practices limited to the thirty days' Exercises, which were always and are considered as the most important part of the Tertianship.

In the early part of the year 1674, Father Blase de Azavedo, the Provincial of the Malabar Province, called Father de Britto to Ambalakata to begin the Tertianship there. Ambalakata lies at the western foot of the Ghats, a mountain range that stretches from north to south, almost along the entire peninsula of India. Here the Society had a college for those of the Malabar Province, who were studying, and a seminary for the formation of priests of the Syrian rite[1]. From Goa the voyage by boat went along the Malabar Coast towards Cochin; this town came into view only after several days at sea but to enter its harbour was not deemed advisable; for, the Dutch, who held the town since 1663, were not at all friendly towards Portuguese missionaries. Hence the sailing-boat, on which Father de Britto was, did not put in at Cochin but held on her course up an estuary near by and then along a river, on whose bank lay Ambalakata. Our voyager had much to suffer; from day to day the heat made itself more felt; the cooling showers of rain during the monsoon had not set in as yet. But the young missionary did not shrink from suffering and hardship; he rather sought them; for he knew they augured success; while in Goa he had already begun to abstain from flesh, fish and wine, the better to accustom himself to the life of a missionary in Madura, so rich in mortification; at Ambalakata he continued this mode of living, though his health had never been strong and the hot climate necessarily had an enfeebling effect. After his arrival at Ambalakata he completed the thirty days of Spiritual Exercises. They strengthened the courageous apostle in his yearning to strain all his forces in the furthering of the glory of God and in the conversion of the unhappy heathen. Only for that did he wish to live; for that he would pledge his life's blood if God would bestow upon him the grace of martyrdom.

[1] The Christians of the Malabar Coast trace their Christianity back to the Apostle Thomas; but they abandoned their connection with Rome and united themselves to the Syrian Nestorians; for a long time they received their Bishops from Syria; towards the end of the 16th century, they were, chiefly through Jesuit missionaries, brought back to union with Rome; they retain the Syrian rite.

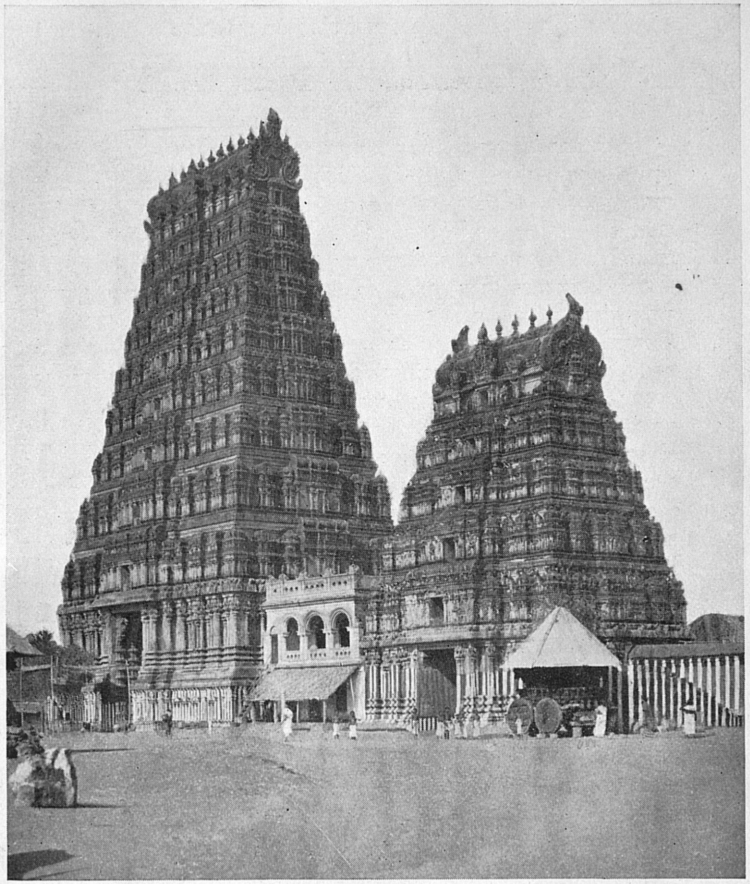
FOURTH CHAPTER.

Entering the Madura Mission.

At Ambalakata, Father Blase de Azavedo, the Provincial, definitely appointed Father de Britto to the Mission of Madura and ordered him to leave for that Mission immediately after the Spiritual Exercises were finished and the renewal of his vows had been made. Once in the Mission he would grow more familiar with the Tamil language universally spoken there. Generally, those Fathers, who were to be missionaries, learned while in a college the rudiments of this to them an indispensable language; then a year or at least half a year out in the Mission itself was allotted them to devote themselves to further improvement in the tongue. Father Andrew Freire, who had come to India in 1652 and had laboured for about twenty years in the Madura Mission, was one of the most distinguished missionaries of that time. For nearly a year he had been busy at Ambalakata supervising the printing by the college press of some of the writings of Father de Nobili. At the wish of Father Provincial he was to bring Father de Britto to the Madura Mission.

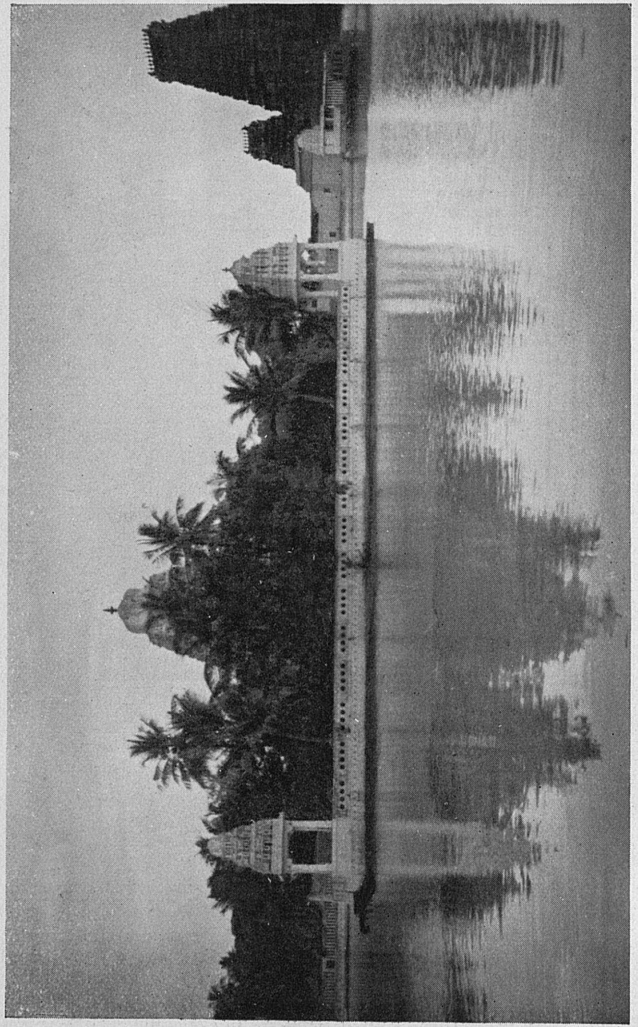
In order to reach that Mission, one could either sail by sea round Cape Comorin to a harbour on the Coromandel Coast and from there make the journey on foot to the city of Madura or to one of the mission stations in the interior; or, one could choose the land route: first over the heights of the Ghats, then farther through the plains of Coimbatore, and again over a higher mountain chain and into the low lying country of Madura. Father Freire left it to Father de Britto to decide on which way they should take. He chose the land route; for he hoped thus the quicker to reach his destination. "The land route," he said, "really appears also to be the harder; but I, indeed, have come to India to take upon myself hardship and privation and not to lead a life of comfort."

In June and July a sea voyage in a small vessel would, anyhow, have been no less rich in sacrifice. The monsoon storms had already burst; they tended to make navigation very difficult and dangerous. Just at that time Father Ignatius da Costa, who had landed with Father de Britto in Goa, did a part of his travelling to Madura by sea. Embarking from Tuticorin on the Coromandel Coast he reached without mishap as far as Porto Novo, a little haven on the coast of the realm of Gingi. When a landing was attempted there, the vessel was driven out to the open sea by power-



Kalayarkoil Temple.

A typical Indian temple consists of a large quadrangle, whose four sides are high walls painted white with broad red stripes. Within the quadrangle is the shrine enclosing the idol of the god, to whom the temple is dedicated. Entrances occur north, south, east and west. Over these entrances arise gopurams or pyramidal structures as in the photo. These structures sometimes rise well over a hundred feet, and are costly but magnificent masterpieces of lavish, decorative Indian art, powerfully, vividly portraying in brick and stone, religious legend or theme or symbolism. To the right of the photo is a heavily wooded and wheeled car, on which for festive occasions the idol is dragged through the streets.



Temple tank at Kalayarkoil.

Another characteristic of an Indian temple is an adjoining pool or tank. Worshippers perform their ceremonial ablutions at its edge. Its waters are rain-supplied, often grow stagnant and, though frequently used by all devotees and dirty, are always sacred.

ful currents. It battled with the waves for eight days and was every moment in danger of being swamped. Provisions had not been able to hold out for so long a time. Altogether worn out by fatigue and hunger Father da Costa had given up all hope of rescue and had offered his life to God as a sacrifice, when, quite suddenly, a favourable wind drove the vessel into the haven and snatched the voyagers from certain death.

In a letter written in 1676 from Kollai, Father Freire has briefly described to the General, Father Paul Oliva, the journey thither from Ambalakata; it was a distance of about two hundred and eighty miles as the crow flies[1]. "On foot and as suits apostles, we broke away from Ambalakata," so he wrote, "and some Indians accompanied us to show us the way and in case of need to defend us against robbers, as such not seldom carry on their lawlessness among the hills. Just on the very first day we were surprised by heavy rains and drenched through and through. The smallest water-courses swelled immediately into deep cataracts and hindered us from continuing our way. We had to seek shelter for the night and we knocked at a Brahmin's dwelling. Soon were we surrounded by an inquisitive crowd; our appearance and unusual dress caused a stir. For a good part of the night we were stormed with questions....who were we? whither were we journeying? and for what purpose? and where did our parents live? had we brothers and sisters? and how many? and were we married? All this, and much else besides, did they want to know. Then they took our baggage in hand and searched through our boxes, not happily in order to steal but out of sheer curiosity. They were eager to know to what use the articles found in the boxes were put. One thing they did not notice, and that was how they bored us. But really the Indian is so. There was nothing left but to resign ourselves patiently. At last the inquisitive crowd grew tired of questions and left us in peace. We had expected, however, that at least a handful of rice would have been offered us; but we were mistaken. Probably they considered us as members of a caste not as highly born as theirs. They agreed to accommodate us for the night in a corner

[1] In the same letter Father Freire says that in the previous year Father de Britto was appointed his co-worker. This would imply that the journey from Ambalakata should be placed only in 1675. But we believe we should decide on 1674; for, Father Freire came to Ambalakata in 1672, or at the latest in 1673, and stayed there a year, and must therefore have left it 1674. Moreover the Provincial, Father Gaspar Alfonso, in a letter to the General in 1682, says Father de Britto had worked eight years in the Mission. He must therefore have come to the Mission in 1674. Father Freire's expression "in the previous year," can easily explain itself, if one takes for granted that the separate parts of the long account, extending over three years, had been written at different times.

of the house; there we had to lay ourselves on the bare ground without even a mat as something to place underneath one. We could not even light a fire to dry our wet garments. This was the first test to which the courage of Father de Britto was submitted; it withstood it. On the following morning we made our departure as soon as possible. In a neighbouring wood we dried our clothes in the sun and wanted to pursue our journey. But our guides, Brahmin by caste, made difficulties; they wished to rest for the greater part of the day and to use the night for travelling. Very likely they believed we were of some lower caste, and they were ashamed of our company. We dared not yield to them; for, to journey by night was too dangerous because of the tigers, bears and other wild animals that lived in large numbers amid the gorges of the hills. Father de Britto began already to suffer much from his unwonted exertions on the long march. At first he did not want it to be noticed and, as though merely tired, still followed the leaders; but at length he had to agree he could go no farther; his feet were inflamed and full of deep wounds. I reproached myself for not having paid sufficient heed to him. A halt for rest was necessary. To Satyamangalam, the nearest Christian station where, to some extent, help and nursing could be had for my worn out confrere, there was still a distance of a few days' march. We made a more than usually long halt; but in spite of his weakness and of his wounds Father de Britto urged that the journey be continued with. The nearer we came to Satyamangalam, the more he forgot the pain; the thought that he would soon be among the Christians of the Madura Mission seemed to increase his strength. At length we reached Satyamangalam. But Nature now asserted her rights. Father de Britto was forced to lie down. Severe illness followed that brought him to the brink of the grave. But at the very outset of his career he was not to be snatched away. God had compassion on him and on the Christians of the Madura Mission and willed to preserve in almost a miraculous manner the life of an apostle so full of promise. Slowly the Father mended and, when he had sufficiently recovered his strength, the journey was resumed. Our way again led over a chain of hills that were almost as high as those near Ambalakata. We had often to scale rocks on hands and feet. Once we saw ourselves face to face with several tigers that approached us till they were not farther away than a stone's throw. Through the sign of the cross, our only weapon and our sole refuge, we scared them away and escaped the threatening danger. In Dharmapur, a station that belonged to the Mission of Mysore, the two Fathers, Anton Ribeira and Joseph Mucciarelli, received us very kindly; we rested a few days there."

Now came the last part of the journey through the plains to Kollai. It was a stretch of about eighty four miles but was not so difficult as the hundred and eighty six miles that lay behind them. On the day before the feast of St. Ignatius, on the 30th of July, the two missionaries arrived at Kollai, and could celebrate, in the midst of people only recently made Christian, the feast of the Founder of their Order.

Father de Britto was now in the Mission of Madura, the goal of his hopes. At Kollai, and under Father Freire's guidance and with Father Ignatius da Costa, who reached there about the same time, Father de Britto had first to perfect his knowledge of Tamil. After a few months he would have to take the place of Father Freire and afford spiritual help to the Christians in the neighbourhood of Kollai and to bring into the fold of the Church the heathens of this wide district. But before we enter more closely upon his apostolic labours, we would cast a glance over the land and the people of the State of Madura as well as over the historical development of the Mission till the arrival of Father de Britto there.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

The land and people of the Madura Mission.

In the year 1610 the Malabar Province of the Order was separated from the Province of Goa. To the latter the Mission of Mysore belonged; to the former, the Mission of Madura. Westwards the Mission of Madura bordered on the Ghat Range and on the boundary of the Mission of Mysore; eastwards its limits went as far as the sea, except for a narrow strip of seaboard known as the Fishery Coast. From south to north the Mission stretched from the Cape of Comorin to nearly as far as the river Tungabhadra. At the time when Father de Britto began his work, the Mission still retained this extensive territory as its field of labour; but, in 1686, the district of Satyamangalam, quite a large section, was cut off and entrusted to the Mission of Mysore. Ecclesiastically the Mission came under the Archbishop of Cranganore and the Bishops of Mylapore and of Cochin. The district comprising the interior of the country belonged to the Archbishop of Cranganore; the northern stretches along the Coast to the Bishop of Mylapore; the southern portion to the Bishop of Cochin.

Within the limits of the Mission were included several realms or States varying in size and power; of these the smaller were mostly vassals of the larger, and the larger in turn were tributary to the kingdom of Vijiyanagar lying in the north. Madura was reckoned among the larger and its capital bore the same name; later on in its history, its court was removed to Tiruchirapalli. Tanjore was also large and its capital had the same name, too. The third notable State was that of Gingi in the north-east, with Gingi as its chief city.

For the most part, the country is a large plain interesected by several rivers; these bear water plentifully only during the rainy season or during the monsoon, which occurs from June to September and again in November; for the rest of the year they are either almost or quite dry. On the plain itself, rice fields alternated with dense woodland consisting not so much of primeval forest with tall trees but rather of thickets built up of acacias, clumps of bamboo and thorny undergrowth and often extending for hours long. In such woodland there lived a people of robber caste, known as the Kallars. Their villages lay hidden among the thickets, and this allowed of their being easily shut out from and guarded against the attacks of enemies. Later on we shall hear of how the missionaries

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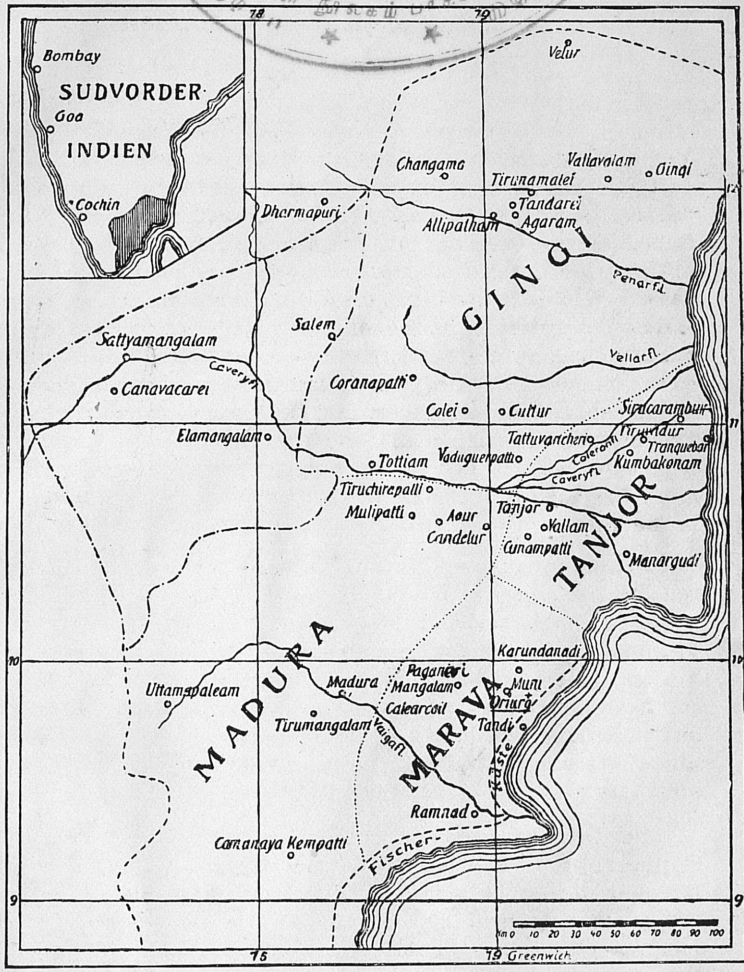

Map of the Madura Mission in Father de Britto's time. The dotted line shows the section of the Mission given to the Mission of Mysore in 1686. In the inset map, the shaded part represents the old Madura Mission.

and their Christians frequently found a place of refuge with the Kallars in these woodlands. There the Christians had to hide themselves, when the armies of hostile chieftains fell upon the land and went plundering through it, or when a persecution on the part of the priests of the gods made concealment necessary for the time-being.

The number of inhabitants within the entire limits of the Mission may have amounted to eight millions. Amongst these millions the caste system held sway more strongly and more rigidly, perhaps, than any where else in India. Everywhere at the head stood the Brahmins, as powerful in influence at the courts of the rajahs as with the common people, and no less proud of their origin and of their position as teachers of the masses than they were as representatives of learning and as upholders of religious observances. Naturally the Brahmins were the born foes of Christianity; for the latter threatened, indeed, to undermine their influence and to destroy it. "They boast," so writes Father de Britto in a hitherto unpublished letter of his to the General of the Order, "to have come forth from the head of Brahma, the impersonal divine being; while the three remaining castes have sprung from his arm, his foot and his stomach. But the haughty Brahmins do not merely draw their origin from Brahma: they go so far as to proclaim they are Brahma itself, and they exact for themselves divine veneration from those who belong to other castes."

Second in rank as well as in influence was the warrior caste or the Kshatriya; at any rate so it was at a time when the profession of arms was at its zenith, held in the highest esteem and in such full swing that only for brief intervals was the torch of war ever extinguished. Next to them was the merchant or Vaisya caste. In Madura its members were known as Chettys or Komatys. Owing to their wealth they had then, as also at-present, great influence over the people. Fourth and last was the caste of the Sudra. It was made up of those who took to agriculture or carried on various trades. Many a chieftain had, however, descended from this caste. But, to a greater extent than the three higher castes, did the Sudra split into endless sub-divisions. The Kallars or Kullars already referred to, who practised the profession of robbery as a hereditary right and were, in consequence, in no way ashamed about it, belonged to the Sudras and in Madura took high rank among them. The Odeyars were also classed as Sudras; they were peasants from the north; next to them came the professional weavers; and, finally, the Kurumbars, who were both shepherds and weavers in woollen cloth only.

The outcastes are generally called Panchamas[1] or less respectfully Pariahs[2]. They were despised, ill-treated and considered quite outside the pale of the law. Precisely to these the poorest and most abandoned, the missionaries turned with special affection. About Father de Britto it was said the Panchamas became his privileged friends, for whom he was prepared to do all and to sacrifice all. From among them Christianity in the Mission won at first most of its followers.

To the Panchamas it was never permitted to live within the limits of a village; to them it was strictly forbidden to touch persons of caste rank or, even merely to brush against their garments slightly; or to handle the belongings of such people; neither were they allowed to carry water to them nor to enter their houses, much less the interior of a temple. If one engaged a Panchama as a cook, or only allowed a Panchama to enter the house, or drank the water that he had drawn, then one was deemed as equally low as the Panchama. The Portuguese, Dutch, English and French, who lived on the stretches of the coast and were all designated by the name of Feringhi[3], did not keep themselves isolated from the Panchamas but commonly had their cooks and servants from this class. In consequence, they were considered as Panchamas by the Indians. So, too, were those Indians reputed, who had been baptised by any Feringhi; they were no longer allowed to live with their caste-fellows nor to eat with them. Families simply rid themselves of a Christian for ever. "To be a pupil of a Feringhi," says Father de Britto, in the letter referred to, "is held here to be a greater disgrace than to be whipped or branded with red-hot iron in punishment for a crime. To have received baptism from the hands of a Feringhi means disgrace indelible."

From what has been said, the anxious care, with which the missionaries avoided every thing in Madura that might have been able to border on the suspicion that they, too, were Feringhi, fs made clear.

Hence, too, the scrupulous observance on the part of the missionaries of all the manners and customs of the people. It would appear that they even made use of mezzo-tinted or intermediate colours to dye their skins darker; at any rate, in a letter to the General in the year 1656, Father Antoine de Proenza requests him "to send for the skin a pigment that lasts."

1 Panchama means the fifth caste; now known as Adi-dravida.

2 Derived from the Tamil word Parayen, the one who beats the drum.

3 Feringhi is taken to be a corruption of Frank, the Saracenic name for Europeans and probably first applied to the Crusaders.

Among the Panchamas were also numbered the Pallars, who were numerous in Madura and in Marava. Like the Panchamas they were often forced to do the meaner services in the worship carried on in the temples and had to draw the car, upon which the idol would on festive occasions be borne around in procession. The Paravars, about whom mention is made so frequently in the letters of Saint Francis Xavier, dwelt on the Fishery Coast; their fore-fathers owed their conversion to the saint. They paid tribute to the Raja of Madura and often came to the capital, the city of Madura. On their behalf chiefly and from the beginning of the 17th century a missionary stayed in the city.

About the religious prejudices and errors of the people of the Madura and neighbouring realms, Father de Britto has left behind an observant account, of which Father Bertrand has published only a part[1]. Father de Britto first speaks of the false views the heathens have of God and then about their idolatry. "Almost all the heathens, who dwell in these realms, maintain that there is a God; but because they do not know the divine Being and the attributes He has, they arrive at a thousand absurdities and entangle themselves in many contradictions. In their sacred books, which they call the Vedas i.e., the essentially true word, they speak of God as a spiritual and infinite Being but also maintain that the sun is their god. The creator of all things, they say, is this sun-god, and that to some extent he is the absolute master; they pray to him in that they prostrate themselves upon the earth at sunrise and at sundown. The Brahmins, who as true Epicureans, think more about the stomach than they do about the sun, have introduced into the Puranas, their sacred books, the saying that cooked rice is the true god; they accordingly pray to it before they eat it up. These same Brahmins, who are the authors of the sacred books and are also the only persons who study and explain them, have among other articles of faith accepted these: that the highest Being, which they call Parabharavastan, is the letter O or Om, and they assert that if any one holding in his breath and thinking of the highest Being should pronounce the letter O and then die, he would certainly obtain eternal glory; for, the soul then would leave the body through the crown of the head, hasten through the ball of the sun and go straight away into heaven.

The greatest error of these heathens lies in this that they accept and worship a false trinity[2], which they themselves have thought out. They speak of a woman, named Parasakti or highest

1 La Mission du Maduré, iii. 337.

2 Trimurti.

power, the mother of three sons. To the first, who was born with three hands, she gave the name of Brahma; to him she lent the power to create all things and to write on the head of each what it should do during life ; all is fulfilled according to what is written ; even Brahma himself, united with all the gods, could not prevent its fulfillment. To the second son, who reposes upon a terrible five-headed serpent and lives in a sea of milk, the mother gave the name of Vishnu and enjoined on him to preserve all that his brother had created. This Vishnu has been incarnated nine times : as a fish, a tortoise, a bear, ; then as a monster half man and half lion ; next as a dwarf ; three times as a man called Rama, and once as a person known as Krishna ; later on he took the form of a horse. To the third son, who married his own mother, she gave the name of Shiva and lent him the power to destroy all that his brothers have created and preserved. About their gods they narrate the most shameful things ; these are totally unworthy of a god, who, according to his essence, is good ; they are unworthy of a man, who, for all that, has still to live in accordance with reason ; and they are such as are not fit at all to be mentioned among Christians.

In addition to this false trinity, the heathens of Madura acknowledge three hundred and thirty million more of gods ; they have raised the souls of men, the stars, the elements, snakes and elephants, cows and horses into divine beings and pay them divine honour. They revere their idols in the same way as they do their gurus[2] and their kings ; for, placing their hands together they raise them above the head and prostrate themselves once, twice and thrice in such a manner that they touch the earth with the breast ; then, standing erect or sitting with crossed legs upon the ground but never kneeling they say their prayers.

They also bring offerings to the gods. The ordinary form of offering is called 'pusei' ; first the idol is washed and adorned with flowers ; then sandalwood and cooked rice are placed before it by a priest. Frequently a priest is engaged to throw flowers or fragrant leaves over the idol ; this sort of offering is known as 'aradnei'. Blood sacrifices called 'peli' are rare. In honour of the gods, pigs, buffaloes and goats are slain but not in a temple ; the sacrifice is performed outside the temple on an altar that stands prepared for that. Before the priest carries out the ceremony, he must fast, bathe himself and perform a series of ceremonial acts, which to describe would lead us too far.

(2) A spiritual guide or teacher

The whole heathen world in these realms is divided into two large sects, each of whom strives continually for precedence. The followers of Vishnu belong to one ; those of Shiva, to the other. The Vishnuites bear a sign branded with red-hot iron on the shoulders ; and on the brow as also on the neck, breast, arms, shoulders and back, several vertical* lines of white ashes display themselves. But the devotees of Shiva paint another sign on their forehead, breast and neck, and do so with cow dung. Each sect maintains that only in it can one obtain forgiveness of sin and salvation. There are heathens, however, who say both sects are equally good ; they would better say both are equally bad. The Brahmins of one sect cannot pass over to the other ; every one must remain in that sect to which his fore-fathers belonged. This prohibition binds the other castes, too, but not so strictly. To the two gods, Shiva and Vishnu, large and costly temples have been erected, almost all of which are constructed on the same plan. Of these the largest and most important are surrounded by a wall that has four doors ; above the doors there arise as many towers, pyramidal in structure ;[1] on these there is lavished the greatest magnificence ; in the interior, the temples are low and dirty ; the custom is observed of smearing the pillars and idols with an oil that makes them black and repulsive. Before the doors of a temple there are generally fine pools, in which the heathens bathe themselves before they enter the temple. They are not allowed to enter the temple with shoes on their feet ; it is also forbidden to spit or to smoke within the temple ; to do so would be an abomination in the eyes of an orthodox Hindu. In the neighbourhood of the temple, the sataram or processional cars are sheltered ; they are large, costly vehicles made out of strong wood and ornamented with wonderful carving. Not seldom ugly figures, but wrought in the finest relief work, cover the cars all over. On fixed days idols are led in procession on these cars through the streets of the city. They are not drawn by horses or elephants but by men, either Panchamas or Pallars. Some of these cars are of such size that many men are needed to set them in motion."

In this land, amid these strange people with their peculiar customs Father de Britto longed to fulfil his duties as an apostle. Many zealous men had already prepared and, to some extent, made easy the way.

* Horizontal usually.

1 Called gopurams.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Mission of Madura previous to the arrival of Father de Britto.

The Mission of Madura, so flourishing later on, had very modest beginnings. Its real founder was Father Robert de Nobili, one of the most renowned missionaries of the 17th century. Sprung from one of the illustrious and noble families of Tuscany, he entered early into the Jesuit Order and urged by apostolic zeal came to India. Soon after his arrival in December 1606, he was sent to Madura, then the capital of the realm that bore the same name. In that city Father Gonsalez Fernandez had been stationed ever since 1595. He had to look after the Christian Paravars, who in the pursuit of trade came thither from the Fishery Coast. In addition to this, he had to envisage the ways and means whereby the Badagas, who were peasants and had wandered from the north into the interior of Madura, could be won over.

With the permission of the Nayak or Raja, Father Gonsalez Fernandez had built a small chapel and dwelling in the royal city but, in spite of his saintly manner of living and his zeal, could win no influence over the heathen populace. Its cause lay in this that he dressed and lived after the European style and was considered by all as a Feringhi. Now a Feringhi was reputed as of equal worth as a Panchama. Moreover a Feringhi not only dealt with the Panchama but drank intoxicating drink and ate meat, nay even beef, which is the most terrible abomination that a Hindu can think of. Even a Panchama, where religion came in, would in no way allow himself to be instructed by a Feringhi. In his unpublished letter of the 9th of May, 1684, which has been referred to already, Father de Britto says: "The heathen of Madura firmly believe that, in as far as one ranks higher than another in noble birth, in so far does he surpass him in spirit. Hence, only those, who are on an equal footing with the Brahmin in nobility of birth, can learn and teach the law of God and any other knowledge. One, who belongs to a lower caste, is already ignorant thereby, and so cannot come forward as a teacher of others. He may be rich and powerful; but, as wise, he will never be acknowledged. Nobility of birth and wisdom go together. And just as one cannot be both high and low born at the same time, so, too, can neither the low born be also wise."

Father de Nobili came to Madura to help Father Fernandez. He immediately applied himself to learning the Tamil language perfectly. With his confrère he often discussed the enduring fai-

lure to bring about conversion and its causes. To him it became clear that a missionary should no longer appear as a Feringhi but should entirely forego all dealing with Europeans and fully adapt himself to the customs of the country. "So, then," he said to himself, "it above all comes to this: Win the Brahmins over to Christianity! For, upon their conversion depends that of the whole people! But they must be made Christians without depriving them of their privileged position; leave their caste customs to them in so far as these are neither idolatrous nor of a superstitious character."

Father de Nobili set to work. With his Superiors he discussed the whole matter and, only after he had their approval, did he draw up his plans. Among the heathen of the Brahmin caste, there were so-called Sanniyasis, who, to all outward appearance, led a very austere life. Because of their solitary way of living and their renunciation, they were held in high esteem by their own caste as well as by the rest of the people. Father de Nobili adapted himself as closely as possible to their way of living and withdrew himself from all association with others, even from staying together with Father Fernandez. He wore the garb of a Sanniyasi, which was a long robe of an orange colour, and a cotton thread that was hung from his left shoulder across the breast[1] and down to the waist. His hair was allowed to grow long and was twisted into a knot on the nape of the neck. He began to wear earrings and, instead of shoes, made use of a kind of wooden soles. Early every day he took a bath and denied himself all food that had lived such as flesh, fish and eggs. Only once a day towards four in the afternoon he partook of food. Rice cooked in butter, and milk, butter and vegetables formed his only nourishment. He permitted himself the service of Brahmins only. To those, who visited him and enquired from whence he was, he merely answered he was a Roman Sanniyasi. The news about this foreign Sanniyasi soon spread throughout the city. Those, who came to see him, confirmed what had been said about him. They had conversed with him and had been astonished over the fluency with which he spoke Tamil and Sanskrit, and over his thorough knowledge of the Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindu; and they asked him the deepest questions about the essence of God and His oneness; they discussed the origin of the soul and of the world and disputed about the destiny of man.

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(1) This thread or cord is a highly prized investiture worn by only the three higher castes; it gives one the right to study. See Dubois, Hindu manners, customs etc., 3rd ed. Clarendon Press, 1906.

Slowly the seed grew. In the year 1607, Father de Nobili had the happiness of baptising ten converts ; in the following year fourteen more and then fully sixty—all members of the higher castes, and some even Brahmins. In December 1610, the Provincial, Father Laertio, had, however, to write : "Difficulties soon arose on all sides ; difficulties on the part of missionaries of other Orders or on the part of the Bishop of Cochin or from his own Brethren (in particular from Father Fernandez, who sent in one memorandum after the other to the Superiors.)"[1]. Nor could the pagan Brahmins calmly witness how the influence of the Christian Sanniyasi was steadily increasing in power. Even some of those, whom Father de Nobili had received into the Church, allowed themselves to grow prejudiced against him. Time and again it was thrown up to him that they had been betrayed by him ; for, through baptism they had suffered the loss of caste in that he, while administering baptism to them, had placed salt in their mouths and had touched them with his spittle.

Naturally, all this caused the zealous missionary much sorrow and suffering, and all the more so because in the heat of the accusations made against him, calumny was not absent. Furthermore, the new Provincial, Father Francisco, who had succeeded Father Laertio in office, declared himself against Father de Nobili and forbade him most strictly to baptise any more. This command stood for full four years ; it was withdrawn only in the year 1616. Before that order, a companion had been appointed to Father de Nobili in the person of Father Vico, who with him now shared bitter suffering. During those four years, as they could not baptise, they sought to strengthen their Christians in the Faith, and Father de Nobili made use of his enforced leisure to produce a series of writings in Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu, which later on were found to be of the greatest possible use.

On the death of Father Francisco in 1615, Father Gaspar Fernandez was nominated Provincial.[2] He immediately had Father de Nobili come to him that the latter might defend himself in person against the accusations brought forward. Father de Nobili went on foot to Cochin. When he heard all that had been charged against him, he was crushed utterly ; but he was able completely to justify himself and had the satisfaction of having many of the accusers withdraw their charges as false and as calumnious.

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(1) P. Laertio ; La Mission du Maduré par le P. Besse, S. J. ; Trichinopoly 1914, p. 200.

(2) Ibid. p. 202.

In the meanwhile an order came from Rome that the new method of missionising should be examined by a gathering of theologians under the presidentship of the Archbishop of Goa. This assembly was of divided opinion on the method but, in 1623, Pope Gregory XV decided in favour of Father de Nobili, who could in consequence return peacefully to the city of Madura and continue as before ; but he left the work in that city to Father Vico and went to the district of Salem where he founded a new parish. But this persecution had harmed the work of the Mission very much. For years the movement called into life by Father de Nobili had remained in check, its first fervour had vanished, and it never reached to that degree of development, which one could have hoped for. From the year 1607 to 1640, possibly more than six hundred members of the higher castes were won over to Christianity.[1]

During this time the lower castes and the Panchamas were not neglected. It was very difficult for the Sanniyasis to occupy themselves with the Panchamas ; they had always to fear that their dealing with them might become known ; if so, their influence with the Brahmin would then be undone. One had to visualise the ways and means of overcoming these difficulties ; this was done.

In the year 1638, Father de Nobili went to Cochin to talk this matter over with the Superiors. The charge had been levied against him that he took little care of the Panchamas, and yet hundreds of these poor, despised out-castes had been converted by him. It was made clear, however, that with the organisation then at work in the Mission, not all, that was desirable, could be done for the Panchamas. But in the city of Madura the circumstances were more favourable than elsewhere because there a church and a Portuguese Father were provided for the Panchamas and the Paravars. In the interior of the country this was not the case. Nor did it seem that the time had come when one should simply ignore all caste prejudice.

After mature discussion at Cochin, it was decided to adopt a special arrangement, which had the approbation of the Archbishop of Cranganore and the assent of the Superiors of the Order. It was this : in addition to Brahmin-Sanniyasis, a number of missionaries should appear as so-called Pandaram-Swamis or ascetics of a lower order, who, so far as clothing and way of living went, imitated as closely as possible what was in vogue with the Brahmin-Sanniyasi. Without compromising themselves in the eyes of the higher castes and losing the right of keeping in touch with them, the Pandaram-Swamis were able to deal openly with the lower castes and

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(1) Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 203.

the out-caste Panchama; without any scruple they could also avail themselves of the services of the Sudra; and in all that concerned religion, even the Brahmins could deal with them and receive the sacraments from their hands as well as allow themselves to be instructed by them. Nevertheless, the Pandaram-Swami did not enjoy the same prestige in the eyes of the heathen as the Brahmin-Sanniyasi did. But the introduction of that class of missionary most certainly conduced to a great furthering of and facilitating of apostolic work. Father Balthasar da Costa was the first who laboured as a Pandaram-Swami; Father de Britto also belonged to this class. At the beginning, the Brahmin-Sanniyasi and the Pandaram-Swami worked near to and together with each other; gradually, however, the former withdrew; then, for a while, all missionaries were Pandaram-Swamis. Hence it came about that, in 1617, there were ten Pandaram-Swamis and no Brahmin-Sanniyasis in the Madura Mission. This was not as one would have wished. The missionaries, among whom most out of humility had chosen the lower position of Pandaram-Swami, saw clearly that, to win over the Brahmin, Father de Nobili's method should be adhered to, and they were not remiss either in laying stress upon this in their letters to the Superiors.

Catechists afforded great help to the missionaries. Of this fact mention is first made in the year 1643 in a letter of Father Balthasar da Costa's to the Provincial of the Malabar Province.[1] "We are," he writes, "in great want of missionaries and endeavour to make up for that to some extent by the use we make of the zeal of our new converts for the spreading of the Gospel. We have appointed some of them to manage the settlement during our absence; and others, to help in the conversion of the pagans; and that they be able to devote themselves entirely to this great and sacred work, we give them monthly a small allowance for their own maintenance and that of their families."[2]

"We have not discovered this arrangement," says Father B. da Costa, "for our Fathers in Japan and elsewhere have also availed themselves of the help of such catechists and with the utmost benefit."

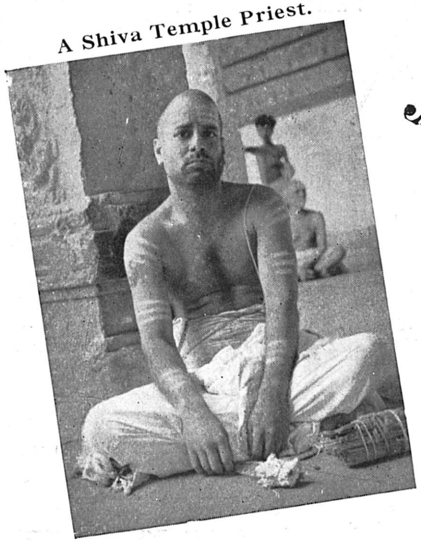
Filled with true apostolic zeal, many of the catechists became real heroes of the Faith and of the love of one's neighbour.

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, ii, 318.

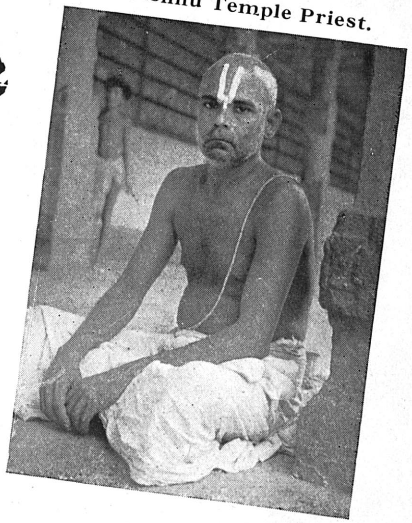
(2) Unfortunately the amount set aside for salaries to catechists did not go very far. Father Balthasar da Costa and Father de Britto sought in Europe for a sum that would ensure the maintenance of a large number of catechists.

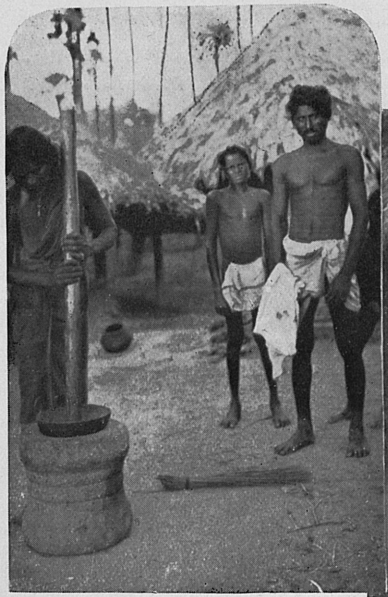
A Shiva Sanniyasi, or Hindu Ascetic.

A Shiva Temple Priest.

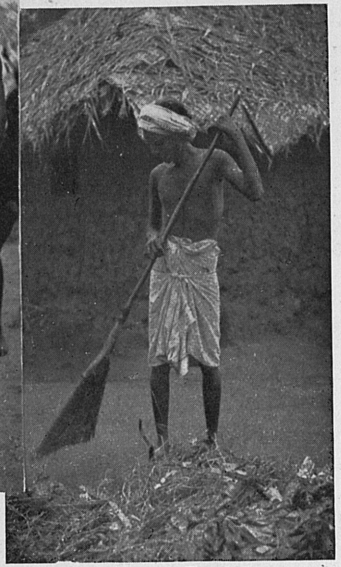


A Vishnu Temple Priest.

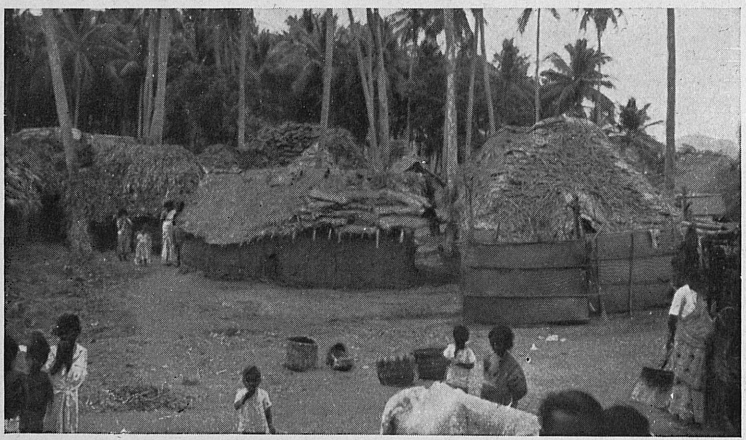




Pallars.



Panchama (Pariah)



Panchama Village.

The Panchama is generally restricted to low, servile occupation.

Chosen from all the castes, they accompanied the missionaries on their journeys or prepared the way for their coming.

About the life of a missionary and especially about that of a Pandaram-Swami, we find in the letters of missionaries records that are not only accurate but go into minute details. Father Schiedenhofen, a German, who with Father de Britto arrived in India in 1690, says in a hitherto unpublished letter[1] dated the first of September 1691, that the daily nourishment was rice cooked in water and to that were added some vegetables prepared in butter. One also often partook of curdled milk and rice. No doubt a missionary should eat fruit; but, then, only a few fruit were wholesome and not to be had everywhere. "Our table," he adds, "is the floor; instead of a plate, a large fig-leaf is used; on this the servant places rice; with the right hand we mix it with vegetables or with curdled milk and with the same hand take the meal to the mouth."

"Water forms our only drink", records Father Bouchet, another missionary, "and in the cold season it is drinkable; but in Summer when the ponds, in which the rain-water had gathered, begin to dry up, it is muddy and bad. Then springs are dug for in the river-beds; but the water obtained from them is so brackish that one can scarcely drink it and, at length, one prefers the dirty water of the ponds."[2] "The Pandaram-Swamis could strictly speaking eat meat; but to avoid giving offence they abstain. On very special occasions, however, they partake of food prepared with meat."[3] "A mud hut, poor and simple and thatched with straw, serves as a dwelling. Usually a small porch, open on one side and about three metres wide, forms a sort of vestibule where the missionary receives new converts."[4] "In the rainy season these huts of mud prove to be unhealthy; damp penetrates them easily; they also run the risk of being washed away as their walls are not firm. Generally the room within receives all its light through the open door alone. The hut is so low that within it one can hardly stand upright."[5] "A mat or a tiger skin spread out on the ground serves as a bed. When the weather is bad, a board is made use of as at-least something underneath one to serve as a better protection against the dampness of the soil."[6]

(1) In possession of the Order.
(2) Welt-Bott Nr. 178.
(3) Letter of Father B. da Costa's in La Mission du Maduré par J. Bertrand, iii, 4.
(4) Welt-Bott Nr. 178.
(5) Welt-Bott Nr. 178.
(6) Fr. B. da Costa in La Mission du Maduré, par J. Bertrand, iii, 4.

Later missionaries speak of beds consisting of a few planks laid on two trestles or wooden stocks. As a resting place, Father Schiedenhofen had in a corner a large trestle supported on four props; as it was fairly high above the floor, it was not, he says, so easily accessible to vermin and to rats.[1] "Our dress," so we read in a letter from Father de Bourges, "consists of an orange-coloured garment. If we journey anywhere, we carry a long staff in one hand and a copper vessel in the other so that, in this hot country where drinking-water is so seldom found, we should not perish of thirst while on our way. Instead of shoes we make use of wooden soles that are not strapped to the feet but, with the help of a wooden peg fastened to the board by a thong, they are held in position by means of the two bigger toes."[2] The same Father also gives an account of the labours of a missionary.[3] "Hardest of all is the work of hearing confessions. As often as a penitent confesses, we again carefully instruct him about the sacrament of penance and of the Altar, and prepare him so beforehand as though he were to receive these sacraments for the first time. With him we renew the acts of faith, of hope, of love, and of contrition and repentance; for, after he has confessed his sins, he must devoutly repeat these acts before absolution. Often the number of confessions is so large that the priest can hardly find time to say his breviary. Occasionally, penitents come here from very far, from a distance of two or three days' journey, and in crowds of from two to three hundred, including women and children; they cannot stay long, as the provisions brought with them last only a short time; moreover, if they were to stay away longer than the time allotted to the feast, they would be severely punished by their pagan masters. There is nothing left the missionary but to hear the confessions of the women during the day and those of the men throughout the night. Should he, however, have to do this often, as at the time of Easter, God must so singularly strengthen him as to prevent his sinking under the burden.

Another important duty is the visiting of the sick. Frequently the missionary is called for from four or more places at the same time. Often all these places lie far from one another. Hardly has he returned home from a sick call in one village than he is fetched away to another. It not seldom happens that, after a most fatiguing trudge through mire and undergrowth, across brooks and rivers, he discovers on his arrival that the sick person is quite well

(1) Fr. B. da Costa in La Mission du Maduré, par J. Bertrand, iii, 4.
(2) Welt-Bott Nr. 142.
(3) Ibid Nr. 142.

and cheerful. For, no sooner a Christian feels himself unwell, he at once sends for the priest, even if no real but an imaginary danger exists. We also visit our Christians scattered far and wide to hold divine service with them, to instruct them in the Faith, to give them the sacraments, to smoothen out quarrels, to minister to their sick, to stop persecution, to baptise the newly converted, and to do more of what is similar to the above.

If one wants to travel in India, he first cooks rice in water; this water is good as a beverage; on the way it is drunk with rice; both boiled rice and this water cannot, however, be preserved for long as they soon sour and are unpalatable. In whatever season of the year one may travel, there is always enough to suffer from. In Summer from the sun, that scorches to such a degree that for some months it is impossible to go out into the open from ten o'clock in the morning up to two in the afternoon because then one could breathe no air and would be suffocated. I know a missionary, from whose face the rays of the sun burned and peeled off the skin more than thirty times. In the rainy season, we are immediately drenched through; for we wear only a garment made of cotton. During the day this does not matter much. But if night should befall us in some out of the way place where neither straw nor wood nor fire is to be found, we are obliged to lie upon the damp ground in our wet garments. While the monsoon lasts, rivers cause many an inconvenience. Indians in general are good swimmers, and on a bundle of straw or of reeds will ferry over the broadest river. If the missionary has to go across, his attendants tie five or six bundles of brushwood together with ropes, place him thereon, and while swimming propel him. to the opposite bank. Or they make use of a long pole; two Indians seize each opposite end with one hand and, keeping themselves above water with the other hand, move forward; the missionary holds on to the centre of the pole with both hands and is thus borne across the river. A large earthen pot may also be used; it is half filled with water, its mouth is closed, and then clasping it with both hands, one steers through the river.

Every missionary has a wide stretch of territory and several churches to administer. Catechists superintend these during his absence. The more catechists a missionary can support, the larger is the number of pagans he can convert to the true Faith. At certain times we move from one church to another to baptise the new converts and to administer the sacraments to the Faithful. Next to every church we have a small hut, in which we usually put up, and now and then a little garden close by. While travelling, we

take our night's lodging either in the house of a Christian if such we should meet, or in that of a well disposed heathen, or in the madamen, that is to say, a bare shelter open at all times to all strangers and to some extent taking the place of a wayside inn, about which, however, there is no idea here. In some of these madamens, one is supplied with Brahmin food and drink ; in others, only whey is to be had or kanji i.e., water in which rice has been cooked ; but, as a rule, there is nothing to be had except wood and water ; one has oneself to fend for all else besides.

As regards baptism, no one ventures to administer it to the children of pagan parents unless these give their consent and permit of the child's instruction in the Faith. Yet every year and without the knowledge and consent of their parents, many children of tender age when dying are saved from eternal death through the waters of regeneration, administered under the pretext of medical treatment by catechists and other Christians fully trained in the manner and method of baptising. Christian parents care for it themselves that their newly born infants do not die without baptism."

The life of the newly converted was very edifying. "How great an aversion they have for sin cannot be described. A priest often hears the confessions of many persons, who in their poignant sorrow shed tears, while he can scarcely find from what he should absolve them."[1] Missionaries attribute the pure lives of the new converts to their practice of prayer. On Sundays and feast-days, they double the time given to prayer. Many, indeed, spend the whole day in the church. When they return home after divine service, those, who have some dispute or quarrel among themselves, choose four arbitrators from among esteemed members of the community and a catechist as a judge ; what these decide is final and continues so for all parties. On festive days of obligation, they show themselves assiduous in attending divine service, even those who dwell far away from the church. The crowding in church is never so great as on the most important feast-days. Then from far and wide and with their women and children, the men assemble wherever a missionary is to be found, and do not return home before the provisions, they have brought with them, are exhausted. The better off do not allow the poor, who have nothing to eat, to go away without anything ; on such occasions some are even appointed to distribute daily to the needy what is necessary for their sustenance. Usually on such high feasts, grown up heathens are solemnly baptised, and of these in many places

(1) Father Bouchet, Welt-Bott Nr. 178.

the number is so great that the day does not suffice but the night also has to be made use of. Not seldom the priest must allow his arms to be supported by catechists, so tired do they become. On such feasts the number of baptised often runs up to a hundred and fifty six, at times to three hundred, and in Marava even up to five hundred.

About the method of conversion used by the Jesuit missionaries of Madura, we have valuable testimony from the pen of Monsieur Francois Martin, the founder and first Governor of Pondicherry, a French colony in Southern India. His testimony is drawn from his own personal experience. He says : "I speak of places where I have dwelt long enough to become acquainted with the facts. The Coromandel Coast is a part of the Indian coast where the Christians, who pass through the hands of the Jesuits, are thoroughly grounded in the mysteries of religion. We see a great difference between them and those, who have been under instruction by missionaries of other Orders. I may be allowed here to repeat what I learned on this subject from the Revd. Father Pedro Paule of the Order of Discalced Carmelites. He is a religious of distinction from his own merit but is also of a Neapolitan family of rank.[1] He had come out to India where his Order has a mission to the east of Cochin and in other territories of Malabar. This Reverend Father made his entry into the Mission of Madura.......and adopted none of the precautions necessary on entering the country, whereby he very nearly caused irremediable injury to the cause of converting the inhabitants.[2] After a stay of from two to three months, he came to Pondicherry. In the conversations we had together, he declared his satisfaction at the experiment he had made. He had learned the fervour and docility of those converts and the precautions observed by the missionaries before administering the sacrament of baptism to a single one of them. They did so only after complete instruction and the imparting of a proper knowledge of the principa mysteries of our Faith."[3].

What the Carmelite testified to weighs all the heavier because he believed he had been unjustly treated by the catechists of the Mission. On account of his dress and appearance they had taken him for a Feringhi and had acted towards him accordingly.

(1) Pietro Paolo de San Francisco was consecrated Archbishop of Ancyra in partibus, and died at Surat in 1700 or 1701.

(2) He was immediately recognised as a Feringhi.

(3) Official memoirs of Francois Martin, founder and first Governor of Pondicherry ; serie T 1169, Archives nationales, Paris, ; translated by W. Irving ; 'Examiner', 1909, p. 253, Bombay.

The first half of the 17th century passed away relatively quiet. The recently established Mission of Madura had been little visited by tribulation. Up to the closing years of the rulership of Tirumalai, the Raja of Madura, peace reigned there as well as in the States of Gingi and Tanjore. The Brahmins did indeed seek to stir up petty persecution of the Christians but in Tirumalai the missionaries and Christians found a protector. Artistically minded, Tirumalai was a peace-loving ruler. The palace that he built in Madura ranked as one of the finest edifices Southern India had to show; its ruins bear witness to that to-day. It is said that he inclined much towards Christianity but it was the moral and severe demands that Christianity set forth, which hindered him from professing it. He died in 1659.

Towards the end of his reign, he entered into dispute with the Raja of Vijiyanagar, from whom he had withheld tribute for many years. War followed between Madura and Vijiyanagar; Tanjore and Gingi joined in. Once again these States were ravaged by the scourge of war. They were warring almost always; only the sides varied; sometimes it was Vijiyanagar and Madura or Tanjore and Madura or Tanjore and Gingi and so on unendingly; generally Madura, Tanjore and Gingi set the stage of war; at-times the Raja of Mysore, a westerly neighbour, arming and seizing that part of Madura which bordered on his own territory, formed a fourth party in the arena. There followed inevitable consequences, such as famine and pestilence that spread over large areas of Southern India. When Father de Britto began his missionary career, war, famine and pestilence characterised the external condition of the whole country, and continued to do so for the next eight years.

In the course of time, and particularly after the introduction of Pandaram-Swamis into the field of labour, the Mission extended much. Limited at the outset to the two chief cities, Madura and Tiruchirapalli, missionary activity had spread itself far into the west, north and northwest. In the year 1674, when Father de Britto arrived at Kollai, nine residences or chief stations had already been established where one or two Fathers lived. From these posts they were able to minister to the surrounding Christian communities. In the state of Gingi such residences were found at Ayaram, Kallur and Kollai; in the State of Tanjore, at Nandavanam; in that of Madura, at Kolupatti, Mulipatti and Vadugerpatti and at Anakareipalam; in the State of Mysore, there was one at Satyamangalam.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

First labours in the Mission : 1674-1679.

After these developments of our theme, let us return to Father de Britto again and to his first labours as a missionary. Both he and Father Freire reached Kollai safely. Before long Father Ignatius da Costa joined their company. Father Freire, under whom, strictly speaking, the district of Nandavanam in the State of Tanjore had been placed, remained for the time being with the two young Fathers in order that, under his eyes and with his guidance, they should grow accustomed to their new work. First of all it meant that the Tamil language, not merely as it was spoken by the Panchamas but especially as it was used by the Brahmins, had to be mastered perfectly. As Father de Britto was still young and his memory fresh, his ear accustomed itself quickly to the strange sounds of the speech. It did not last long before he had set to work. On account of the confusion caused by war and the distress of famine resulting therefrom, a pestilential disease broke out which began to ravage the State of Gingi. It would have been impossible for Father Freire to have coped with the labour to be done in the many infected villages. So Father de Britto helped as much as he could. He had no need to preach: God Himself did so through the pestilence. To many Father de Britto administered baptism and the other sacraments; of danger to his life he thought nothing; his brave heart knew no fear.

In his visits to the sick at Kollai and in the neighbouring villages, he came into touch for the first time with the priests of idolatry, and learned to know of their deep hatred of Christianity. These foes of the only true religion sought to prejudice the hale and the ailing against the missionary. In secret and in public they said the Christians had through their lapse from the religion of their forefathers brought down upon them all the burden of the pestilence as a chastisement; only when all should have returned to the worship of the gods, would the gods turn away the scourge from them. To all, even to Christians, they presented ashes that had been dedicated to the gods. If they besmeared themselves with these ashes and called upon the god Shiva, they would be safe from infection and, if already ill, they would not die.

But Father de Britto also witnessed the fervour of the Christians and their loyalty to the Faith. They refused the ashes offered them by the idolatrous priests and replied they hoped for health and life from Jesus Christ alone, their Lord and Saviour. A cate-

chist, Gaudentius by name, distinguished himself above all others; he had been converted to the true Faith only a few years before and not only did he live up to the commandments of the Faith but he also stood up for the same and defended them against the priests of the idols. With Father de Britto he hurried through the villages where the pestilence raged, and strengthened the newly converted in their faith. At last he himself was seized by the contagion and died a victim of his charity.

Father de Britto did not stay long in Kollai. The district, which came under the control of this station, could no longer be administered from it as a central point; the number of villages, in which small Christian communities had formed themselves, had, in spite of the adverse conditions of the time, developed very quickly, and a division of the district into two parts thus became necessary. This took place in 1676. Instead of Kollai, Koronapatti, lying more to the north, was chosen as the centre of the northern district; the southern found its centre in Tattuvancheri; this village lay eastwards and to the north of the river Coleroon; this southern district was entrusted to Father de Britto; and in 1676 he set out for his new field of work.

There it was to him a matter of much consequence to win the good will of two brothers, who were the Administrators of that district. This was all the more imperative as many of his Christians were either employed in their official service or tilled their fields. Accompanied by some Brahmin Christians, Father de Britto accordingly went to the place, where the Administrators lived, to pay his respects to them. Both received him with all honour. Through the spontaneous amiability, which, according to Monsieur Francois Martin, was characteristic of Father de Britto in his social dealings, he succeeded in winning over the two brothers to his side. They granted him full freedom in making known the Christian religion in the district and assured him and his Christians of their protection. Later on they frequently gave him proof of their good will and requested his prayers on their behalf. Unhappily they went no further and so did not fulfil the hopes that were cherished of them. "The chains", says Father Freire, "that bind them to voluptuousness are still stronger than those that hold them under the yoke of idolatry."[1]

Tattuvancheri, the place where Father de Britto had to stay, was a lonely out of the way village. To the missionary it, however, afforded some appreciable advantages. There he had better opportunities of bringing the Panchamas under his care unnoticed and of dealing with them more often than would have been possible in a largely populated town. Moreover, the remoteness of the spot offered at-least some sort of safety and of peace during the warfare that filled the country with terror.

(¹) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, p. 274.

Just at the time when Father de Britto came to Tattuvancheri, the Raja of Madura was at feud with Ekoji, the Raja of Tanjore.[1] Ekoji was a Maratha from the northern Deccan and a step-brother of Shivaji, the famous Maratha ruler. Having violently usurped the throne of Tanjore, Ekoji gave Shivaji the pretext for entering the country from the north. Moving through Gingi, Shivaji approached the boundaries of Tanjore and made a prisoner of Ekoji. But the latter succeeded in making himself free, gathered an army together, marched against Shivaji, who was moving to Gingi, and gave battle. But Ekoji had been merely led into ambush and was defeated. Shivaji, with the Raja of Madura, now turned towards Ekoji's capital, which was saved by Ekoji paying a considerable sum of money to the victor. Having received the indemnity, Shivaji overran Gingi and, by building strongholds in all its chief towns, strengthened his sway over the whole State. To pay for the cost of these fortifications, Gingi was thoroughly plundered. Tanjore was also ravaged but by its own ruler; for, Ekoji, in order to indemnify himself for the amount he had paid to Shivaji, pitilessly drained the already impoverished State of all its resources. To make the misfortune complete, towards the end of the year 1677 a terrible inundation occurred as the result of cloud-bursts, such as not rarely happen in Madura during the months of November and December. "Whole villages", Father Freire relates, "were flooded; numberless human lives lost; famine and pestilence followed. Robber bands traversed the country and made every thing unsafe."

Scarcely had Father de Britto felt at home in his new field of work at Tattuvancheri than he began to visit the surrounding Christian communities. Nevertheless, he could not look after them all as he would have wished. In a letter to Father Freire he refers to this: "The unrest and confusion that the war has caused, and the marauding gangs of Shivaji's troops have prevented me from visiting all our Christian communities: nor could our Christians come to Tattuvancheri in as large numbers as I had expected. Out of six hundred catechumens, who were instructed and prepared, only three hundred and ninety received the sacrament of baptism."[2].

(¹) Also known as Venkaji or Vyankoji.

(²) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii. p. 274.

In the same letter he gives some interesting details about the life of his mission station. "A young fellow from Tirupurambiam, only sixteen years of age, had in spite of opposition from all his family shared in the instruction given to the catechumens. After six months of trial he received what he wished for and along with the other catechumens was made a Christian. The heathens mocked and reviled him. But persecution served only to deepen his faith and to make his courage shine in brilliant light. Shortly afterwards, he fell seriously ill. The idolators at once ascribed his sickness to the revenge of the offended gods and redoubled their endeavours to bring about his apostasy. The young Christian, deploring the stupidity and callousness of the heathens, placed his trust in Saint Francis Xavier and made a vow in his honour. He was completely cured. A few hours' distance away was the church but he came running there, confessed and received holy Communion in thanksgiving for the great favour God has bestowed upon him. Several eye-witnesses and his own mother assured me of the truth of this account. Since then his mother prepares herself for baptism.

In the village called Marayam, a pagan lay dangerous ill; he listened to the advice of a near relative, who not long before had become a Christian. Soon after baptism he had died peaceful and joyous. At his death some heathens were present and among them an idolatrous priest. At the moment when the young man expired, this priest quite carried away with astonishment exclaimed: "Do you not see the soul of this Christian how it raises itself heavenwards? Oh! what beauty, what splendour! How lovely is that soul! On a triumphant car it moves upward surrounded by blinding light!" Thirty heathens, who heard these words of the priest, drew their own conclusions therefrom, had themselves instructed and have since been baptised; many others will follow suit; they are already being prepared. But that idolatrous priest, who according to the will of God, was the instrument of their conversion and had been a dispenser of the true light to them, is even till to-day in the darkness of his unbelief."

A Brahmin woman, who counted many Christians among her relatives, was for several years frightfully tormented by an evil spirit. "She begged me," Father de Britto relates, "to help her; she could endure it no longer. I sent her some blessed ashes and had informed her the use of the ashes could be of aid to her under the condition that she utterly renounced idolatry, prayed only to the true God, and placed all her trust in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. She declared herself ready to do all this, brought herself to strow

some of the blessed ashes on her head and was suddenly freed from her suffering. Her relatives, highly esteemed Brahmins, gave me this account; two catechists, whom I sent to the place to investigate the circumstances exactly, confirm their statement. Whether the Brahmin woman will rest satisfied with this that she has found bodily health again or whether she will fully follow the invitation of grace, cannot be said as yet; I hardly dare hope for the latter alternative.

I could mention further favours bestowed upon our Christians. Just this one: On a certain day clouds of locusts had descended upon the neighbourhood of our village and threatened to destroy the entire harvest. I blessed the fields of our Christians, besprinkled them with holy water and strew some blessed ashes over them. The crops of our Christians remained intact while those of the heathens were completely destroyed."[1]

In another letter to his close friend Father Freire, he describes an event that again afforded proof of how God protected his servant and his companions; it should find place here. "The chapel and the priest's dwelling lie on a suitable elevation not far removed from the bank of the river Coleroon. When I chose this place to build upon, I was assured that the river in the worst of floods had never risen as far as here. This year, in 1677, unusually heavy rain fell. In reality the river began to encroach far beyond its banks; but the water was always far from the chapel; no one thought of any danger. But, in the middle of the night of the 17th of December, a Friday, I was suddenly awakened from sleep by loud shouting and screaming coming over to me from the village near by. I arose quickly. I surmised what the cause of the clamour was and found that the water had already reached the height of our surrounding wall and had made its way into the courtyard through the openings, that had been left in the wall to allow of the flowing away of rain-water. Eighteen Christians lived in their own huts near the chapel. They stood aghast when they looked out and saw the sea of water; in anguish they rung their hands. Every means of escape seemed cut off. Happily I kept my blood cool and put my trust in God and could console and encourage them. I ordered them to stop the openings in the wall through which the water forced itself unchecked into the courtyard. I withdrew for a short time into the chapel to appeal to the divine mercy for help. When the Christians no longer saw me, they were again seized with fear and, without saying anything fled to a neighbouring wood to save them-

(1) In India to-day the plague of locusts occurs. The swarm darkens the sky just as a heavy snow storm does.

selves, and if necessary to climb the trees there. Then I saw the water rose to the height of the encircling wall and, forcing an opening through, poured itself into the courtyard ; it swept away my hut. Till then I had hesitated to follow my Christians to the wood ; but I now stood up to the breast in water and, turning towards the wood, fought my level best against the stream. I held on to a hedge ; its thorns wounded my hands and feet. Finally I reached the top of a hillock. The ruins of an old mud hut stood there. We are not yet touched by the water. Here I stay ; here I am at least safe from snakes, which live in large numbers in the wood. Eight Christians keep me company and we arrange ourselves together on the highest point. In the meanwhile the sun has arisen and for the first time we now see the full greatness of the danger we are in. Before us and on all sides a sea with no shores ; here and there arise from out of the water little points, the top of a house or that of a tree ; on the flood the dead bodies of human beings and of animals are carried away ; trunks of trees, rafters, entire thatched roofs float about or are caught in the branches of trees jutting out of the water. A fresh danger presents itself before us : the inundation is of such a kind that it must last for a few days. But we have nothing to eat ; if we do not drown, we shall die of hunger. This I said to the Christians, who were with me, and begged them to go and fetch some rice ; for, amidst the ruin of our dwelling at the distance of a stone's throw, enough could be found. One should have to swim across, for the water had already risen too high for wading. A strong swimmer undertook the venture. Commending himself to God, he plunged into the water, made a wide detour to avoid the force of the current and came back with a fairly large store that would suffice for all. A third danger now threatened us from the snakes that began to contest our place of refuge. Not only those from the wood but also those from the plain were driven from their holes and turned swimming towards our knoll. Day and night we had to be on the watch either to kill or to toss them back into the water. We grew hopeful once more. But, on Sunday, the water began to rise again ; it looked as though our hillock and all of us would be buried beneath the flood. My Christians were quite dismayed. Some gazed dumbfounded upon the expanse of water ; others in a loud voice entrusted themselves to the mercy of God ; all of us surrendered ourselves to His will and endeavoured through a courageous offering up of our lives to prepare ourselves for a good death. Meanwhile the water ceased to rise. A faint glimmer of hope shone once again. We had, however, to think now of taking some nourishment. During the last three days fear and hope had striven within us continually ; danger threatened on all sides ; in

such conditions of excitement we had forgotten food. To give the others courage I now went into the water ; it rose up to my shoulders ; slowly feeling my way I turned towards the wood to gather some sticks that had been deposited there by the flood. My example met with imitation. We succeeded in making a fire and in cooking our rice in the earthen vessel in which we had preserved it. With nourishment there also returned strength and fresher courage. We said to ourselves : if needs be, we can hold out for a few days. Even if the inundation should force us to leave our refuge, we could still escape to the wood where the snakes, that had saved themselves on the trees, would give us plenty to do. But it was not to come as far as that. On Monday the water decreased considerably. It did not last long before we could abandon our imprisonment and return to the site, where the chapel had stood. Full of joy we thanked God together for our rescue from the menacing danger of death.

I stayed on at Tattuvancheri to celebrate Christmas with the small gathering of Christians, who were able to come. The chapel and the priest's house had been destroyed but we gathered a few pieces of wood and palm-leaves as well as portions of roofs that the flood had washed along. With all these we erected a sort of a hut which served as a chapel. Here we celebrated the birth of the Saviour of the world. Our arrangements suited the character of the festival. Poverty was our only adornment. So it must have pleased the little Child of Bethlehem. We could unite our poverty to His. Discomfort was not wanting either. All was damp and clammy ; a cold, cutting wind blew ; against it we were unable to shelter ourselves.

Shortly after Christmas, through Providence a sort of festival of the Three Kings dawned for us. For I received a very nice letter from the two Administrators, about whom I have made mention earlier. They expressed their sympathy with me and invited me to come and stay with them ; if, however, on account of my calling and duties I considered it inconvenient and desired to remain in my seclusion, they offered to be responsible themselves for the expenses of the re-building of my chapel and of my house. The second part of their proposal I gladly accepted and began forthwith to build a new chapel and a new house on the same spot, where the previous buildings stood."[1]

While the new buildings were being constructed, the unassuming missionary lived in a miserable hut. "From very far off", he fur-

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré iii. 276.

ther relates, "Christians of different castes came to Tattuvancheri to receive the sacraments. In consequence of the disturbances caused by the war and owing to persecution, from which the Christians of Tanjore had to suffer much, the majority of them had found no opportunity for receiving the sacraments during the last few years. Meanwhile an order from the Superior of the Mission called me temporarily away from Tattuvancheri. I should, so he wrote, visit the Christians in the north, in the State of Gingi. I therefore first went to Koottur situated not far from Kollai."[1]

Between Koottur and Kollai there stretched a vast and dense forest. In this the missionary believed he could best and most securely pursue his labours. On account of the continual warring expeditions of Shivaji's troops, he was not safe enough in Kollai; for the same reason he was unable to live at Koottur. So in the centre of the forest he built a chapel and, in addition, a hut for shelter. During their construction he afforded opportunity to the Christians to fulfil their duties. Much time was also devoted to the instruction of a large number of catechumens. At the beginning of Lent he returned to Tattuvancheri again. "I had to work day and night," he wrote to Father Freire, "as more than three thousand received the holy sacraments during Lent."[2]

In the newly built chapel at Tattuvancheri, Easter was celebrated as festively as possible. Many Christians and pagans had hastened thither; three hundred catechumens had the happiness of being received into the Church. After Easter, Father de Britto paid a short visit to Vadugerpatti, the residence of Father Emanuel Rodriguez, the Superior of the Mission. There he also met Father Freire. What then happened well nigh proved disastrous to the three of them. "One day", so Father Freire recounts, "we were quite unexpectedly seized by a troop of Marathas; they mistook us for Muhamedans, who had fled hither from Gingi. They wanted to take us away as prisoners. We tried to make it clear to them we were Sanniyasis, and no Muhamedans; but we did not succeed; for they understood no Tamil nor we their language. Finally, one of their leading men took our part. We were set at liberty. Naturally, we immediately sought a place of refuge that offered greater security."[3]

From there Father de Britto went back to Tattuvancheri, where many pagans of the higher castes came to visit him. This prevented him from giving to the Panchamas his full care. He accord-

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, 276.
(2). Ibid. 276.
(3) Ibid. 281

ingly decided upon building a chapel in the centre of a wood south-east of Tattuvancheri and in seclusion greater than before. A place called Sirukadambanur was situated there. According to tradition, Saint Francis Xavier had preached there and had built a chapel[1]. This very circumstance might also have influenced Father de Britto in choosing to build a new chapel in the vicinity of the old one, whose ruins are shown even till to-day but stand on a spot now in the possession of a heathen. When Father de Britto arrived there, the rains had already set in. "I had," he wrote, "to swim across several streams to reach that isolated spot. After I had to some extent arranged matters for myself, there commenced such rainy weather that the streams swelled greatly and I was fairly cut off from the outer world. I found myself on an island. For some days my companions and I suffered much from hunger. We could get no rice and were forced to make use of some herbs. Hardly had the water subsided than the Christians thronged in from the neighbourhood. Within a month more than one thousand five hundred went to confession, and more than three hundred idolators received holy baptism. A further three hundred and eleven were being prepared for and should soon after have been baptised, when I had again to interrupt my work. This time, by order of the Superior of the Mission, I had to undertake a journey to Madraspatam[2] and there to settle a transaction of great importance." About the nature of this affair, Father de Britto says nothing in his letter. He speaks almost only of the great sacrifice that the sending meant for him and about the troubles of the long and difficult journey. In it he mentions the conversion of a Christian belonging to a distinguished family and possessed of great influence; he, at-length, brought him to confession again after an interval of nine or ten years and to lead a better life.

Owing to this long journey his work had to suffer. Out of a thousand neophytes for baptism, he had to put back three hundred for the following year.

Father Freire, who sent a long letter to the General of the Order about the first year of the labours of Father de Britto, adds a few sentences that, for the estimating of Father de Britto, are all the more important as they come from an experienced man, who for years together had the opportunity closely to observe his Brother in religion. "Out of humility Father de Britto has been silent," he affirms, "about many things in his letters. I must bring into pro-

(1) Launay, Histoire des Missions de l'Inde, IV, Paris, 1898, 7.
(2) At-present, Madras.

minent notice his zeal for souls which quite masters him, and the plainly excessive exertions he puts himself to. On the part of the Brahmins of Koottur he had to endure much. They were furious when they saw he had settled down in their near neighbourhood; fortunately they knew the Administrators of the district were inclined towards us; that kept them back from much, which they would otherwise have done. In a wood near Koottur the zealous missionary has already settled three hundred and sixty Christians round about the church. The situation of this residence is very favourable. Good Father de Britto has to forego many things; but what is earthly he prizes little; the saving of souls is his life, his sustenance and his joy. Recently a wealthy Christian, who lives on the coast in the midst of Europeans, came to see Father de Britto, about whose penitential life he had heard much. He partook of the meal, which a Brahmin cook had prepared; all the nourishment consisted of some rice and bitter herbs, which the guest, however, could not relish. With his physical weakness and his poor state of health, one must marvel at how he can endure such a life!"

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

In Tanjore and Gingi, 1679-1685.

Gingi was still under the sway of Shivaji, the Deccan Maratha Chief. After his death in 1680, his son Sambhaji, who was no less aggressive, took over the rulership. In Tanjore Ekoji governed with tyrannical power; he had drained his people dry of their wealth and then set about to seize for himself all the temple possessions, all their gold, all their silver and all their landed property. The Brahmins complained and made their protests to the Raja. They declared that henceforth the temple sacrifices would cease as the rice fields, that belonged to the temples and by whose produce the services in the temple were defrayed, had been confiscated; and this would arouse the wrath of the gods. The Raja replied that, as the gods ate no rice, only flowers in future should be offered them; that would be enough.

As in the year 1677, so also in one of the following years Tanjore was afflicted by a terrible inundation; in addition there were tidal waves, that swept away whole villages in the neighbourhood of the sea-coast.

Guided by his letters, we shall now accompany Father de Britto through the next few years. The first of these letters, written in 1680, briefly describes what had happened to him during the year 1679. Beginning, however, with the close of the year 1678, we find he was then either in the State of Tanjore or at Tattuvancheri or at Sirukadambanur. From one of these places he went to Koottur to continue his work there. It was mostly at Koottur that he celebrated Easter with his Christians. After Eastertide he left to return to the State of Tanjore and went to the district of Pandanellur. "Here I baptised", he writes, "a large number of catechumens, who had been prepared by the catechists." Then, after giving the sacraments to the Christians at Tattuvancheri, who had flocked thither from the surrounding country, he journeyed to Kumbakonam. A contagious disease would seem to have broken out there; at any rate Father de Britto says he went there to visit the sick. Soon after, he heard that one of his best catechists, Dnanamuttu by name, was dying. He did not feel well himself and had sores on his feet; but that did not prevent him from hastening to the loyal old man, who had rendered such valuable services to the Faith, and to the missionaries. It was a long and difficult journey of two days. Father de Britto arrived just in time to administer the last sacraments to the dying catechist, and

to spend the hour of death by his bed-side. In his letter Father de Britto affords splendid testimony to his loyal catechist: "All the Christians wept for him as for their own father. He certainly deserved this name because of his tender care and his tireless zeal. Day and night, in the heat and in the rain, he was always ready to go wherever the wish of the missionary or the need of his Christians called him. Great was his love of the poor; what he possessed belonged to them also. When the obsequies were performed, the Christians availed themselves of the occasion for receiving the sacraments. During the previous years they had had little opportunity of doing so."

From there Father de Britto went southwards to Kararampatti on the Marava side of the Tanjore frontier. "Every one dissuaded me from going there," he writes, "on account of the hostile feelings of the heathen. The country is very bare; its soil is hardly productive; its people severely oppressed. It is astonishing that the pride of the heathen is so great and their hatred of the true religion is so deep. It is chiefly the Brahmins, who ceaselessly harass and persecute the Christians." "I eagerly wanted," he continues, "to speak with the Brahmins but they would not allow of that. They took good care, they said, not to come to me; I knew how to caste a spell over all, who visited me; I gave them a powder that I had prepared from the ashes of little children, whom I had killed and burned; I would bewitch them, too, and force them to become Christians, and the other heathens would follow their example; then the gods in their anger would send a terrible plague upon the country."

Father de Britto spent several days with his Christians and during his stay baptised some heathens; a number of others had to be tested still further. He then left for Sirukadambanur and had almost finished his work there, when information was sent him from Tattuvancheri that, under orders from the Raja, a troop of soldiers had come to Tattuvancheri to make prisoners of the missionary and of his Brahmin converts: and, as they had not found whom they wanted, they had sent people out, who should search the whole neighbourhood. "I considered it prudent," says Father de Britto, "to avoid this persecution through flight. Disguised, I made for the sea-coast and embarked for Gingi. Among the Christians there, I laboured for two months and then returned again to Tanjore. The Raja was engaged in a war and had no time to think of persecuting the Christians further. I reached the river Coleroon and crossed it; then heavy downpours of rain fell, the streams grew swollen suddenly and I had to swim through three. Night overtook my companions

and myself in a wood. A strong, cold wind blew, the rain streamed down, and to that came chill and hunger. All seemed as though leagued in conspiracy against us. But the Providence of God helped. Towards midnight we met two heathens, who led us to a hut close by; they kindled a fire and placed a good meal before my companions; to me they brought some milk; for they believed they should not offer any thing else to me as I was a Sanniyasi. On the following day we set forth on our journey; it began to rain again and rained steadily till about four in the afternoon. We came to a deep canal. The current was so strong, we dared not venture into the water. On the other side we saw some men and asked them to lend us an earthen vessel that with its aid we might come to the other side; they refused. I settled myself under a tree and began to say my breviary. I was thoroughly drenched and shivered with cold and had to be prepared to go through the night like that. God helped again. Suddenly I saw on the other side of the canal a young man, who in a loud voice shouted: "Where is the Sanniyasi who cannot cross!" I answered him. He plunges into the water and comes over; first he carries my books and other things to the other side; then myself and my companions. After we had spent the night in the hut of a Christian in the village close by, we set out at daybreak on our journey and reached Sirukarambur* safely. Here we celebrated Christmas, for which many Christians had hastened to us from the neighbourhood. The baptisms, I administered here, brought the number received into the Church this year up to nine hundred."

At the opening of the new year, 1680, Father de Britto heard the news that peace apparently reigned in the district of Koottur; Sambhaji had straightened matters out there with the chieftain of the forest region. So he left Sirukadambanur and came to Tattuvancheri, where he saw the devastation that the soldiers had wrought the previous year, when they had wanted to arrest him. Proceeding farther towards the north and through many villages of Gingi, he consoled the Christians everywhere and afforded them opportunity of receiving the sacraments. For Easter he was at Koottur. But he could not stay long; for, with impatience the Christians and catechists of Sholamandalam to the west of Tanjore and those in the district of Mannarkoil awaited him. There the labours of the apostle were spent above all upon the Panchamas and the lower castes; and in order to devote himself with full freedom to them, he withdrew for fourteen days into a forest. That brought great privation upon himself; for the Panchamas, however,

*Now Sirukadambanur.

he gladly bore with all. In the forest there was no hut as a shelter for him ; his drink was the slimy water in a ditch ; his nourishment a handful of rice ; and he always stood in danger of being torn to pieces by tigers, which were not uncommon there, or to be roughly handled by robbers, who did not know him. The number of confessions, that he heard there, counted up to two thousand, and through holy baptism he received a hundred and fifty catechumens into the Church. After this he again went to the west towards the frontier of the State of Tanjore and into the district of Kararampatti. Heavy work awaited him there. He relates : "I made use of the night to instruct the Christians and to administer the sacraments to them ; during the day I was fully occupied with the heathens ; I was able to baptise a good number of catechumens of the higher castes."

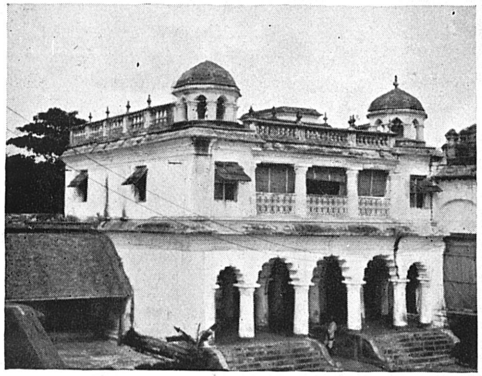
Up to the 31st of July, the feast of St. Ignatius,[1] he stayed at Kararampatti. His intention was to return again to the north but he only got as far as Tirukareiur. There he broke down altogether. The exertions he had undergone were too great for his weak constitution. A dangerous fever attacked him ; his legs were covered with virulent sores and a painful excrescence formed under the eye-lids. Some local medical quacks were called in but they did not know what to advise. "After ten days had passed," says Father de Britto, "God suggested to my mind to seek refuge in the intercession of Saint Francis Xavier. I took the saint at his weak point ; for, I renewed in his honour the vow to spend my last breath in the conversion of his dear Indians. At once the pain grew less and, in a few days, I was completely set up again."[2]

Father Freire, who had been informed of the illness and had immediately started out to help Father de Britto, reached him too late : the tireless missionary had already resumed his labours.

The north of the mission had now to be visited. He accordingly went to Gingi, where he spent the last three or four months of the year. Everywhere there was the same taxing work ! At Koottur he spent Christmas. His Christians there had to suffer much from the Brahmins, and particularly from Meenakshi, the owner of the village. He out-shone in his hatred of the Christians. More than once he appeared before the Administrator of the district and sought to persuade him to destroy their chapel. Once he even sent for them and made it clear that towards the festive offering,

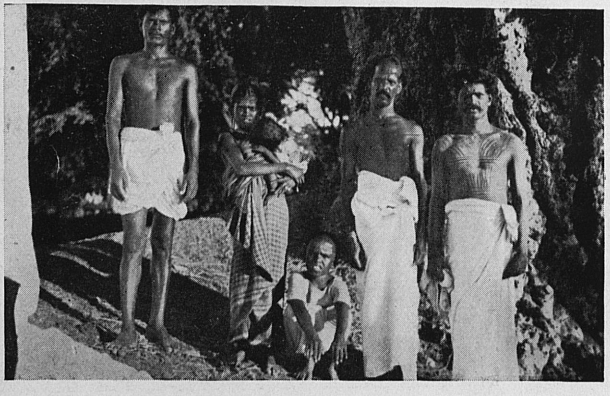
(1) Fernão de Britto, Historia do nascimento etc., 74.
(2) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, 321.

Tirumalai's Palace at Madura.



Centre—**Palace at Ramnad.** *Bottom*—**Maravars Ploughing.**

Odeyars.



Kurumbars. **Kallars.**

The Kurumbars are shepherds and weavers in wool only; the Odeyars are peasants, and the Kallars are woodsmen and probably aboriginal.

he would make to the gods on the following day, they would have to contribute and be present in person. They refused. Then he poured forth abuse and uttered cruel threats and hurled dreadful curses against Christ and His Church; he added he would force them indeed and show them his might! The Christians stood firm in their refusal and with beating hearts awaited the morrow. In prayer they watched through the night. The next day broke but divine justice had intervened. Sudden death had snatched the tyrant away. Upon many heathens this made a deep impression; they saw in it a punishment of Heaven, and entering in upon themselves they requested to be received among the number of catechumens; seven hundred of them in the course of the following year were baptised.

Next year in 1681, Father de Britto commenced his circuit in the realm of Gingi. He stayed there during Lent and celebrated Easter with great pomp. "The chapel and its courtyard", he says[1], "were decked out gaily; there was a procession and music, fire-works and rockets to the great joy of Christians, who love such display. What consoled me most of all and gladdened me was the zeal and the devotion, with which during these festive days and during holy Lent, they nourished themselves at the table of the Lord. The number of those, who came to the sacraments, mounted up to more than four thousand; over three thousand were baptised."

The missionary was already preparing to journey to Tanjore when an order from the Superior of the Mission was handed him to leave for San Thome at Madras about a matter that concerned the whole Mission. In an entry in his diary, dated the 3rd of May 1681, Monsieur Francois Martin mentions this journey: "Father de Britto, with whom I was in steady correspondence, visited me in Pondicherry and stayed three days. Then he travelled to San Thome and two days before my departure for Surat returned to Pondicherry."[2]

Towards the end of May, Father de Britto was among his Christians at Sholamandalam. There the idolatrous priests worked with fury against him; they even sought his life. He had in consequence to lie hidden. In a remote hut concealed in a forest, he did all that lay in his power to satisfy the wishes of his little flock and administered the sacraments. But his heart glowing with apostolic love utters the complaint: "How can I console myself when I realise that I alone cannot suffice for all! Just in that most

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, 323.
(2) Cf. 'Examiner,' 1909, p. 253.

essential matter, the hour of death, I so often cannot be near my Christians; we must receive help else the Mission can have no duration." In the meantime the foes of the missionary had won over the Administrator to their evil designs. He even sent a body of soldiers to kill the hated Sanniyasi. But the latter had already left for Kararampatti and so escaped certain death.

Following upon a terrible hurricane, the rainy season again brought on an inundation and of such a kind as had never been known within the memory of man. In the single district of Tiruvadur, in eastern Tanjore, ten thousand people perished. God's protection visibly guarded the Christians: in the whole district not one of them fell a victim to the tempestuous weather. In Pandanellur the Brahmin, who, two years previously, with the soldiers of the Raja had destroyed the chapel at Tattuvancheri, lost his life through this inundation. When he saw his house threatened, he wanted to flee and gathered his money and jewels together; but he was caught in a whirlwind and thrown into a river, in whose waters he was drowned. During this very hurricane about eighty Christians, when their own huts had been swept away, sought shelter in a building which, they imagined, would set at defiance the stormy weather. The catechist, who was with them, exhorted them to trust in God. They prayed throughout the night. When towards morning the storm lessened in its fury, they all went out of the building. At that very instant the building crashed down in a heap. It was as though God had hindered its collapse till all were safe. This incident made a deep impression upon the heathen population and it was for many the beginning of conversion. During the course of the year Father de Britto had baptised in this district six hundred and eighty; but on account of the hurricane a large number of catechumens had been prevented from being added to this total.

The first months of the ensuing year, 1682, saw the indefatigable missionary again in the State of Gingi visiting various places, where members of his flock lived. With great harshness Sambhaji ruled there, and the Christians much needed the consolations of their holy religion to remain steadfast amid their tribulation. At Koottur Father de Britto celebrated the Holy Week services and Easter in such a splendid manner as had never been seen before. Disturbances due to the war had driven Father Joseph de Silva out of his residence at Kandelur; he had arrived at Koottur to help Father de Britto till such time as the return to his station should be possible. A third priest at Koottur was Father Almeida, who had been appointed Rector of the college in San

Thome at Madras and was travelling thither. No less than five thousand Christians assembled to attend the Holy Week ceremonies; all received the sacraments. But the gathering of the three priests did not last long. After Easter, Father de Silva went southwards to Randavanam; while Father Almeida made for the north to pursue his journey to Madras by way of Karanupatti.

Father de Britto was planning to go to Tanjore, when two sources of news held him back. He writes: "My catechists informed me that the attitude of the country there was very hostile; the Administrator of the eastern districts had issued the order to seize the foreign Sanniyasi; they most urgently requested that through flight I should save myself for the sake of the Christians."[1] The other source of news came from Father Freire, who in the meanwhile had been appointed Superior of the Mission.[2] He wished that Father de Britto should set out at once for the Fishery Coast and there seek the Father Provincial to discuss several important points with him, which he communicated to him in writing and in detail. In accordance with this demand of obedience, Father de Britto started on his journey immediately. He describes it in a few words: "I went to the sea-coast and boarded the first boat I came across. The sea was unusually rough; the wind adverse; and the current drove us with such force northwards that we could hardly work against it; for fourteen days the boat laboured on. Frankly, our plight more than once seemed hopeless. At last there was nothing left but to make for land and to take the way back on foot through Marava on to the Fishery Coast."

By his Brethren, who laboured among the Paravars on the Fishery Coast, the zealous missionary was received with great affection. There he came to know that the Provincial, Father Gaspar Alfonso, had returned to his residence at Topo; thither he had to journey.

Topo was a little place on the south-western coast of the Peninsula; a small establishment with a few Fathers was kept up there. Important matters were to be discussed. In the first place there came up for their consideration what their attitude should be towards the Carmelite missionaries, who, independently of the Portuguese Government, had been sent out to India by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. The Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs in Goa, called the Junta, had declared that the sending of the Carmelites did not agree with the Portuguese

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, 326.

(2) Ibid. p. 331.

rights of patronage and had commanded the Bishops to oppose the missionaries strongly. This could only do harm. So the missionaries of Madura wished that this command should be withdrawn or at-least mitigated. Father Freire suggested to the Provincial to allow Father de Britto to travel to Goa and to deal personally with the Junta; but from that the Provincial anticipated little success, as the matter had to be regulated between the Apostolic See and the Portuguese Government.

The second subject for consideration concerned the procuring of a charter for the missionaries from the Raja of Gingi; to secure that, the mediation of the Viceroy of Goa should have to be appealed to. The project presented many and thorny difficulties. The third matter for deliberation was the calling down of two Indian missionaries from the north to the Mission of Madura. As they understood Marathi, the language of Sambhaji and of his soldiery, and also knew Sanskrit, the language of the sacred books of the Brahmins, they could be of the greatest use in the northern portions of the Mission, such as Gingi; on the other hand, however, so long as the war lasted and there was persecution, it did not seem advisable to employ these Fathers in the Mission. Among other points for discussion, the question of revenue for the salaries of the catechists came up. In September 1682, the Provincial, Father Gaspar Alfonso, reported in detail on the proceedings to the General of the Order. Somewhat earlier than this Father de Britto had left on his journey back to Madura.[1] Some months after his departure from Topo, Father de Britto wrote: "I finished the matter that had taken me to Topo and after I had received the blessing of the Provincial, I left Topo, carrying away with me the best of impressions. The community, whom I met there, were real brothers to me and were true followers of Saint Francis Xavier, the apostle of that part of the country. On account of business I had still to delay at Tuticorin; finally, I was able to take ship, accompanied by Fathers Hieronymo Telles and Ludovic de Mello, two young missionaries, able and pious and eagerly desirous of labouring for the conversion of the heathen in the Mission of Madura. The sea

(1) Some writers of the life of Father de Britto believe he took the vows of the Professed during his stay at Topo. According to the existing catalogues it can be definitely fixed that up to 1677 he had not yet made the last vows. In the catalogue of that year there stands behind his name: 'nondum professus,' i.e., he had not made the vows of a Professed. In 1685 there is noted near his name that he is a Professed of the four vows, i.e., he had made the solemn profession. Between 1677 and 1685 the taking of the last vows must have occurred. But the fact that neither Father Britto in his letter written after visiting Topo nor the Provincial in his report to the General of the Order makes any reference to the solemn profession, tells against the year 1682.

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could not have been more stormy nor worse than it was. For thirty five days we were in constant danger of our lives and we could say with Saint Paul: 'thrice have I suffered ship-wreck.' For, on this voyage we were three times very near death: our boat was shattered by the waves; we could then only cling to some wreckage; and, while we struggled against the might of the waves, a Muhamedan ship took us aboard; but our rescuers soon wanted to be rid of us: they realised they themselves were in peril because the supply of provisions would not suffice for them and for us. They ordered us to take to a small, rotten boat that had no sail nor rudder. But God was our helmsman. He led us into a haven happily while the ship, that had cast us adrift, probably met with her own wrecking. It was in the month of September, that we landed in the State of Gingi. With the two missionaries, who with fervour began their study of Tamil, I stayed there for two months. In December I left them, entered Tanjore and visited many Christian communities in this realm."[1]

For the year 1683, Father de Britto wrote the annual report sent into the Father General. He first comments on the terrible oppression of the inhabitants of the States of Tanjore and of Gingi by their rulers. He says: "In Tanjore the ruler takes four-fifths of the produce of the soil as assessment and demands that the assessment be paid in money and not in kind: but he himself fixes the selling price and places it higher than the market rate. In consequence the proceeds of the entire harvest do not suffice to meet the assessment and so the debts of the farmers increase from year to year. In Gingi the conditions are still more terrible." He now passes on to describe his labours and those of his fellow-missionaries. At the beginning of that year he stayed close to the frontier of Marava. "Here our foes", he says, "are so numerous and powerful that it appeared impossible for us to spread Christianity. But success proved once more how easy it is for God to do what to men seems impossible. To our instructions many have lent a willing ear and have become Christians and, indeed, pious and zealous Christians. Here I was challenged by two proud heathens to a public discussion on matters of religion. To them it was more an affair of attacking than of learning the truth. The dispute veered round on 'the writing on the forehead', about which much is said here. Every one, so they say, bears his destiny written on his brow; by this sacred writing all that he thinks, says and does is determined beforehand and, indeed, so unalterably, that neither a Brahmin nor any of the other of their millions of gods can hinder

(1) J. Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iii, p. 326.

even a tittle of it. I proved to them how absurd it was to maintain such a thing. As they did not know what to answer, they began to revile and to raise false accusations against me; but they rested content with words only. I left soon after to stay for fourteen days at Kumbakonam and at Mannarkoil, and there I baptised those heathens, who had been thoroughly prepared by the catechists, and I also administered the sacraments of penance and of the Altar to the Christians of the neighbourhood."

As usual Father de Britto celebrated Easter at Koottur. Much anxiety and disquiet prevailed there. The Christians, who were employed in the palace of the Administrator, informed the missionary that the Administrator had issued the order to arrest him. Continuing in his report, Father de Britto says: "Through a public circular, the followers of the law of the Feringhi have been declared dishonourable; they have received the command to abandon all towns and villages and to dwell outside of them in the Panchama settlements. To every heathen it is forbidden to deal with Christians or to touch under pain of punishment their money and other goods, which have passed through their hands; they are to consider the Christians as without repute and without caste and to treat them as such. To an Indian worse cannot be done. Yet our Christians remained steadfast. They asked me how they should conduct themselves. I recalled to them some sentences of Holy Writ: man must reach Heaven whether it be through honour or through ignominy; here on Earth persecution is the beautiful inheritance of a child of God: 'blessed are ye,' so the Saviour has said, 'when you suffer persecution'. Finally, I advised them to give up their occupations and to leave their homes and to settle down in a district, where they could serve God with more freedom. My words gave them courage and consolation. The chief instigator of this persecution soon met with deserved punishment. He died after a few days. Whether the Administrator will also be punished or escape this time.......?"

The plight, in which the Christians were, grew somewhat better. In order not to enrage the persecutors by his presence, Father de Britto decided on leaving Koottur for Tanjore. There, however, he received the news that the Administrator of Sirukadambanur had sworn to put an end to all Christians, to burn down their churches and their houses and to plunder them of their goods and chattels. At the head of the new persecution stood a certain Rama Nayaken, who possessed great influence in the district. He brought forward many calumnies against the Christians, and made the

accusation before the Administrator that to the Feringhi in Tranquebar, a Danish settlement on the sea-coast, they had sold an ox for slaughter. The Administrator waxed wrathful. Such a crime had to be avenged. He but waited a favourable opportunity. Father de Britto proceeds in his report to say: "The Christians now requested me to obtain for them from Prince Ureiar a letter of recommendation, which they could produce before the Administrator. I went to the Prince and he gave the Christians a letter for the Administrator, which contained the following: 'I, thy powerful lord, favoured by fortune and the commander of armies, assure thee, Pona Marathan, of my benevolence and of my protection. Thou knowest that the Sanniyasi of the Lord of all things, whom I prize very highly, dwells in my country. Out of the respect that I entertain for him, I have had a house, which is under my protection, built for him and his disciples. I know that this Sanniyasi also has a house and many disciples in thy district and I command thee to treat him with good will.' A Christian took the letter to the Administrator. The latter did not lose his self-composure but answered as follows: 'Prostrate before thy Highness and with my eyes cast upon thy feet, have I, thy servant, received thy letter. I prize it as a great gift and I answer it humbly. Thy Highness can be kindly towards the disciples of the Sanniyasi of the Lord of all things only because thou knowest not their despicable lives. They are so low and are so shameless that they set themselves above the most sacred laws and sell their oxen to the Feringhi of Negapatam and Tranquebar. These Feringhi are mean, evil and cruel people and fear neither the gods nor men; they kill oxen and eat their flesh. Thy Highness, from whom nothing can be hidden, knows the tremendous enormity of this crime. My lord, Ragupandiden, has through his spies learned the doings of the Christians and has recommended me to exterminate this accursed sort of people. I hope your Highness will not hinder me in fulfilling my duty. I know thy justice and thy zeal for what is good. If we do not take action together, then numberless oxen and cows will be slaughtered, and the burden of so heavy a crime will also weigh heavily upon us, as we did not prevent it through proper punishment.'"

The Administrator read the letter out publicly and then gave it unsealed to a Christian, who handed it over to Father de Britto. The latter feared evil consequences if the letter from the Administrator should, in accordance with the custom of the country, be read publicly by the Prince; so, instead of sending it to the Prince, he withheld it, and most urgently requested all the Christians to

entreat the help of Heaven. God heard their prayer. A few months afterwards, in July of the same year, the Administrator was deposed in shame and disgrace. Far and wide the rumour now spread that the Raja had also ordered his hands and feet to be cut off to punish him for his faithlessness and for his many embezzlements.

In the meantime, Father de Britto had left Tanjore for the north and visited the Christian communities in Battavalam, Tirunamalai and Tandarai. There he spent a month on a rocky hillock that lay in the middle of a dense forest. A hut made of foliage served as a chapel. He had much to endure. Danger constantly threatened from tigers and snakes; the glowing sun burned fiercely; only now and then a breath of cool air made itself felt; the most necessary means of living were lacking. In spite of this the apostle laboured day and night tirelessly. To the Panchamas the nights were devoted; but before sunrise they had to withdraw to a distance lest the caste heathens should grow suspicious and come to know that he also busied himself with Panchamas. During the day heathens came to dispute with him about religious matters. Great patience was needed to let their rudeness pass by unnoticed and to answer the many ridiculous questions they brought forward.

Not for long did the missionary remain hidden in this seclusion. The Administrators of the north, who had previously forbidden him to make known the Gospel in their districts, heard about his presence there and sent soldiers out to seize and kill him. In his report Father de Britto describes what happened: "In the forest, in which I dwell, the tyrants' soldiers caught a Christian, who had left somewhat later than the others; from him they wanted to know my dwelling place. The Christian succeeded in deceiving them and escaped. By another way he hastened to me and informed me the soldiers were quite close. I hid the things needed for divine service and with the eight Christians, who were still with me, I began to pray. It was a Friday. We thought God would now give us the grace to die for His sake. My disciples encouraged one another to steadfastness and, in addition, wished one another the happiness of being permitted to die as martyrs. But God did not hold us worthy as yet of the martyr's crown. The soldiers did not discover us and withdrew at sunset. This gave rise to the strong suspicion that they had not been sent by the Administrators but by some subordinate official, who fought shy of coming out into the open. The plan of using violence was now abandoned and, by other means, it was sought to place obstacles in my way.

An occasion soon presented itself. Silla Nayaken, a general, plundered and ravaged the country at the head of a party of soldiers from Mysore. In broad day-light a merchant was robbed and lodged his complaint with the police. The police officer in charge, spurred on by our enemies, suggested to the merchant to declare that the disciples of the foreign Sanniyasi were the thieves. On this ground, men on horseback and on foot were despatched to make a prisoner of me. While they were on their search after me, the voice of the people clearly indicated who the thieves really were, and the police officer had to recall his men. Scarcely was I freed from this danger than I hurried northwards and over the boundaries of the State of Gingi and into the realm of Golconda. I stopped fairly long at Uttaramanalur, a populous trading town. My catechists had prepared things well; I was able to baptise a hundred and eighty and many others declared themselves ready to come under instruction. On the return journey I again stayed for fourteen days in Gingi to baptise those, who were prepared. Then I hastened on in order to arrive at Tanjore before the commencement of the rainy season. Near my chapel in the forest of Sirukambanur* I hoped to be able to enjoy some rest but the time for that had not come as yet. Again an order went forth from the Administrator there to make me a prisoner and to confiscate all I had. The Christians, who are very numerous here, now mustered together and in a straightforward manner, told the Administrator that all of them would abandon the district if he should lay hands on their 'swami' or priest. This worked. The order was at once withdrawn. But in the heart of the Administrator hatred continued to glow. In the following night he secretly sent some soldiers out with the injunction to bring him my head as he 'wanted to see but not to speak to me'; they were already near my chapel when with thunder and lightning a heavy storm burst; in the forest they now lost their way and had to give up the search. The Christians thus gained time to inform me of all that had happened. I deemed it best to withdraw from further persecution and to return to the north into the realm of Gingi. After a stay of two months there, I believed I could make my way back to Tanjore for Christmas, since, according to the reports I had received, things in the meanwhile had grown more quiet. Heavy was the work at Christmas: but God cared for my consolation. During Christmas time eight hundred of my flock came to the sacraments. In that year I had baptised a thousand and three catechumens."

*Sirukadambanur.

Father de Britto records a remarkably wonderful favour from Heaven. "In a village called Satipadi three children in a field were surprised by a thunderstorm and fled for shelter under a tree. Lightning struck the tree and their corpses were found afterwards. Two of these children were pagans and, according to the custom of their caste, their dead bodies were burned. The third, a boy thirteen years old, belonged to a Christian family, which had been baptised only a few years before. They wanted to finish the actual burial, when the bereaved mother threw herself on her knees at the graveside and began to pray loudly to Saint Francis Xavier: "Oh glorious Saint Francis, I have always hoped thou wouldst be my protector! Before my relatives I have always taken pride in thy protection! Now my little son is dead and they all ridicule me. Oh great saint! show them that in thee I have not hoped in vain! Show them that my child, who bears thy name, also shares in thy protection! To the honour of God and of His holy religion call my child back to life!' Her prayer was heard; the boy raised himself up alive and sound. All were astounded and, with the mother and the boy, went to the chapel to thank God. Marvellous hearing of prayer is not uncommon. A new convert called John was wont to say the Credo over the sick and sudden healing followed. In the case of illness heathens came to him or recommended themselves to his pious intercession." In a heathen country, where to the devil greater power is given, we should not wonder if we often hear of diabolical possession. Of his time Father de Britto reports: "More than twenty instances could I adduce, where the possessed were suddenly and wonderfully freed through the reception of holy baptism." According to the statement of Father Bouchet, who for many years worked with him in the Mission, Father de Britto could not thank God sufficiently for this that, through such self-evident wonders, God had strengthened him so mightily in the Faith.

NINTH CHAPTER.

Superior of the Mission, 1685-1686.

From the year 1684 to 1686, information about Father de Britto grows scarce. For these years we are referred to the brief remarks of Father de Mello, who in 1686 wrote the annual report to the Father General. This report gave an account of the chief events between the years 1684 and 1686. In it mention is made of Father de Britto as Superior of the Mission. He was, therefore, no longer only a missionary in charge of a residence and of the Christians attached to it but, in addition to the management of his own district, had also supreme control over the whole Mission of Madura. At that time the Mission consisted of nine missionaries and twelve residences only.

Father de Mello says nothing as to when Father de Britto was appointed Superior. Some biographers of his life are of the opinion his appointment must have taken place towards the end of 1682 or at the beginning of 1683, soon after his return from Topo. But this is not correct. A hitherto unpublished letter of Father Emanuel Rodriguez's, who, after Father Gaspar Alfonso, took over the management of the Malabar Province, gives us more exact information. On the 6th of April, 1685, Father Rodriguez reports to the General of the Order on the events that had most recently taken place in the Malabar Province. He writes that he and his consultors had wanted to propose Father de Britto for the post of Rector of the college of Ambalakata; but the latter had called upon him with the most urgent entreaty to desist from his intention and to leave him in the Mission of Madura, and had declared he had not the qualities necessary in one, who was to be at the head of a large college.[1] The consultors, before whom the Provincial laid the matter, were of opinion one should yield to the request of the Father but nominate him as Superior of the Mission in place of Father Freire, whose period of office was at an end. The beginning of 1685 is, therefore, to be fixed for the nomination of Father de Britto to the Superiorship of the Mission.

How very highly those under him prized their new Superior, we can gather from a letter of Father Telles's, who came to the Mission in 1682.

(1) Father de Britto was certainly not incapable of fulfilling the post of Rector at Ambalakata. The catalogue, which is prepared by the Superiors every three years and is sent to the General of the Order at Rome, says of Father de Britto in 1677 and again in 1685 that he has qualities good enough for all posts and labours in the Order.

He wrote to his brother in Portugal: "I have already sent thee a letter by way of Goa; but, as the Revd. Father de Britto is appointed Procurator of the Malabar Province and as such will go to Rome, I write to thee in order to send thee this account by way of France, the quickest route. Father de Britto is a true apostle, quite an extraordinary man in every way. Since 1682, when I set out for the Mission with him, he has brought, through his indefatigable labour and in spite of severe persecution, the Christian community on to great development. He has used his office and his power as Superior only to help us; for himself he has always reserved the most burdensome labours. His activity and his zeal are worthy of admiration. To save souls and to spread the kingdom of Christ, he braves all dangers. For the Lord he has been made prisoner more than once and has been condemned to the most horrible torture. From this great apostle I have always experienced much love and kindness and I shall never be able to thank him enough for that." Before this the same Father had also written: "I give thee now no news of my mission; thou wilt find the essentials in the annual letter, which I have translated at the order of Father de Britto. This great missionary travels through, and of course always on foot, the realms that form the Madura Mission. His zeal and yearning to help our Christians and to convert heathens are so great that I believe I see in him, Saint Francis Xavier."

During the years that Father de Britto was Superior, the Mission was frequently tried by bitter persecutions. Father de Mello says these persecutions were worse than the earlier. In the district of Satyamangalam, a conspiracy first broke out against the Raja of Mysore and against his officers and officials but, in its further development, it gradually grew into a great persecution of the Church. Father Noguera and Father Pereira, the two missionaries in charge of that district, fell victims to the extraordinary exertions they underwent for the welfare of their Christians; both sickened and died. No sooner he received the sad news, Father de Britto, as a sollicitous Superior, went to the orphaned district to console and strengthen the Christians there.

After quiet had been restored in the west, a worse storm broke over the Christian community in Tanjore. On a circular tour through that realm, Father de Britto had recently baptised a large number of catechumens. Rejoicing over much in their happiness, many of these quite lost sight of what prudence demanded. They openly proclaimed their faith, and then smashed idols and with their feet spurned those shrines, before which they had formerly

prayed. Embittered not only by the number of conversions but especially by these exhibitions of imprudent zeal, the Brahmins united and obtained permission from the chief minister of the Raja to arrest all Christians and to throw them into prison at Kumbakonam. The police were despatched to carry out the warrant of arrest.

Gaudioso, a young Christian, only eighteen years of age and belonging to one of the most respectable families in the realm, now distinguished himself above all others by his zeal. He was seized, chained and cast into a dark dungeon. Of him the judges demanded that he should deny his faith. As he stoutly refused, he was put to torture and so cruelly beaten with a cane that his whole body was but a wound. Then the judges, who were near relatives of his, endeavoured in other ways to bring about his apostasy. "Like a low criminal," they said, "dost thou stand before us. It causes us dishonour. For us the disgrace lies precisely in this that thou belongest to the Christian, to that execrable sect, and thou despisest our gods, who among their worshippers number so many Rajas and great and learned men. Surely all these persons must be convinced of the greatness and the glory of our gods else they would not have spent so much treasure in erecting to their honour the magnificent temples, which all admire. What has thy God for His temples but miserable huts! You Christians say our wise men have not found the truth! You assert that only you and the Panchamas, with whom you mix, have discovered it! This is intolerable presumption! Shouldst thou in thy blind obstinacy have lost all feeling of honour, then at-least have pity on thy family, which through thy conduct thou coverest with shame!" Christ's champion answered nobly and briefly: "The Christian religion is the true one alone. The number of its followers and their position can neither lessen nor heighten its truth. I am determined rather to sacrifice my life than to give up the truth or to deny it. My greatest honour I see in this: to suffer for Christ!"

These words so embittered the judges that they condemned him to death on the following day. Gaudioso was taken back to prison. That evening, a very close relative, a little maiden eleven years old and who was preparing for her baptism, came to the prison to bid him farewell. "Oh, brother", she said, "how I envy thee the good fortune to be able to die for our God. When thou standest before the presence of God, entreat for me the same grace!" During the night the guards allowed the prisoner to go to his nearest relatives to take leave of them. Together with him, Father de Britto had baptised his mother, his wife and other relatives. To all of

them Gaudioso said: "I have come to embrace you for the last time and I make of you a triple request: Pray most earnestly for me that God may grant me perseverance to the end; do not consider it a disgrace that I must die a violent death; for, a martyr's death is the greatest honour that God can bestow upon his dearest friends and, indeed, I am not worthy of the same; finally, may you never through fear of the loss of honour or of wealth or of life be induced to set aside the commandments of God." All were moved and promised never to forget these three points. Then he consoled them with some heartfelt words and went back to prison. Without the sanction of the Raja, the Brahmins and officials dared not execute the sentence of death; finally, the fear of bringing down upon themselves the Raja's displeasure weighed heavier than their hatred. Gaudioso remained in prison.

While this took place at Kumbakonam, Father de Britto had travelled through the southern parts of the Mission. He had also been to a little town, in which till then no missionary had ever set foot or had ventured to do so; it lay in the realm of Madura but its name is not known; Father Besse is of opinion it was Ventakulam.[1] No house afforded him shelter; he settled down in a palm-grove and received a throng of heathens, who hastened to him from all sides. Grace aided his preaching. Late one evening he was on the point of baptising about two hundred catechumens, when information was brought to him that a gang of heathens was close and wanted to make a prisoner of him. They had been stirred up by the Brahmins. Father de Britto advised the catechumens to flee and, to give them time to do so, went forward to meet his foes and asked them what they wanted there. They answered him with insults and struck him with their sticks; then they fettered him with chains and led him and his catechists away to prison. For several days they remained in jail. Twice executioners came with axes to cleave their skulls open; Father de Britto and the catechists bowed their heads to receive their death-blow. At length the Brahmins and the priests of the idols deemed it advisable to avoid murder and to set the prisoners free. They took away, however, all that the prisoners had brought with them.

No sooner made free than Father de Britto received the news of what had occurred in Tanjore. Forgetting all that he had endured, he immediately set off to bring comfort and, if possible, relief to his cherished Christians. His plan was to go straight to Kumbakonam; but the Christians, who had brought him information of the persecution there, besought him with tears to withdraw to the other side of the Coleroon river. "When wolves tear a few sheep to pieces, it is a mishap," they said, "that can be made good again. But if they seize the shepherd, what then will become of the whole flock? From Tattuvancheri thou canst help and counsel us without danger." To their entreaty Father de Britto yielded and accompanied by them went as far as the Coleroon; there he was placed on a bundle of wood and, with some holding him and others swimming around him, he was brought safely to the other bank.

(1) La Mission du Maduré, 575.

Without loss of time Father de Britto envisaged the ways and means of warding off the misfortune that had befallen the Mission and of stopping the persecution, which grew severer day by day. All the prisons in the realm were already filled. The Brahmins had closed all access to the Court of the Raja so that it was impossible to obtain an audience of the Raja or to get a letter of recommendation delivered to him. One had to venture the utmost. On the advice of Father de Britto, the Christian officials of the palace went in a body to the Commander-in-chief of the army, a Muhamedan, and requested him to use his influence with the Raja on their behalf. "We have," they said, "but one wish: let us be heard, let us be able to justify ourselves! Should our accusers convict us of one of the crimes of which they accuse us, we are ready to undergo punishment; but should our innocence stand forth, then let the Raja protect us against the cruelty of his ministers!"

To go alone against the Brahmins the general did not dare but promised, when opportunity offered itself, to use his influence in favour of the Christians. This became known. Rama Nayaken, whom we already know as the bitterest foe of the Christians, called on the general and advised him not to mix himself up with the affair: he pointed out that the Christians were also enemies of Muhamed; if one did not check their spreading, in a few years the whole country would be Christian. On this occasion and along with other presents, he sent the general a beautiful, thoroughbred horse. Not able to withstand such a gift the general changed his attitude towards the Christians.

In secret the latter now turned towards another Muhamedan held in high esteen at Court. Upon his and Father de Britto's advice, it was decided that among the Christians of the palace the Panchamas, who had to take care of the horses and the elephants, should strike work in a body and not feed the animals. They struck, and there arose great confusion in the royal stables. The Raja, a great lover of horses, heard about the disorder and enquired

as to its cause. The Muhamedan official seized the opportunity of speaking in favour of the Christians; he told the Raja they were not treated justly; they should at least be allowed to vindicate themselves. Hearing this the Raja took the matter up and had six Christian officials of the palace summoned before a royal minister to vindicate themselves against the charges brought forward by Rama Nayaken.

The Christians admitted the first charge. It was true they prayed to one God only, and that they refused to make offerings to the heathen gods; therein, they said, they but demanded freedom, such as was accorded to all; the Muhamedans, who did not believe in the gods of the heathen, were, however, left in peace; even among the heathens themselves one sect would have nothing to do with the gods that some other sects worshipped; the Christians forced no one to pray to their God and so they failed to understand why they should be forced to honour the gods of others. As regards the remaining charges, they only consisted of calumnies; and these had to be proved; if one could prove them, so were the Christians worthy of punishment; they would accept any punishment, even death itself.

From the governor of Kumbakonam the Raja now demanded strict investigation into the whole affair. The wrath of the Brahmins was at white heat. 'Tie the Christians to the tails of horses', some advised, 'and let them be dragged along the streets of the city!' But the chief Brahmin, who was also the judge presiding over the court of justice, did not dare comply with such a demand. Assembling the Brahmins together, he dramatically threw the document, that conveyed the Raja's command, into the centre of the hall and said: "If any one can prove a single of the crimes of which the Christians are accused, I will see to it that not only those, who are now in prison but all Christians in this realm, are put to death. Otherwise it will be impossible for me to condemn them." No proof could be brought forward. The judge had to declare all the Christians innocent and to let them go free and, in addition, to grant that in future they could with full freedom live according to their religion. The prison doors opened. Father de Britto was there to congratulate the faithful members of his flock, especially Gaudioso. Then he turned upon the Brahmins and accused them of gross injustice in laying hands upon his Christians; if it were a crime to be a Christian, they should have seized him first. "Come, now!" he cried, "bring your objections against our religion! I am ready to answer you in the presence of the Raja!" But no Brahmin accepted the challenge.

For a time Father de Britto could devote himself to his pastoral work in Tanjore. Towards the end of 1685, we find him at Agaram in the north, where Father Telles laboured zealously. Two of the most respectable and influential Christians there had for long given scandal by their want of mutual forgiveness. For many a year they had lived in open enmity and all endeavours to reconcile them had been frustrated. Father de Britto heard of it and believed he could be of help. After Benediction, which he held one evening, he went to both of them and made it clear that it was not enough not to bear hatred in one's heart but that they, as the disciples of God, Who had died for his enemies, should love each other. "God, to whom you daily say that you wish to forgive as He forgives, does not content Himself with this," said Father de Britto, "that He does not hate and does not wish you evil. Such forgiveness on the part of God would not satisfy you. No, He loves you. God, Who penetrates the depths of your hearts, cannot be deceived by you!" In spite of this, neither of them would yield. Then Father de Britto exclaimed: "Because you, even for the love of Christ, are not ready to forgive, I will, to save your souls, do penance for you!" With that he laid hold of a whip and beat himself till he bled. Both the men now threw themselves weeping at the feet of the priest and assured him they were willing to bury all discord and to love each other from the heart.[1]

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(1) In the annual letter written by Father de Mello in 1686, and as given by Father Bertrand in ('La Mission du Maduré iii,376, ff.') mention is made of an event in which Father de Britto would appear to have taken part. The residence at Kandelur was to be given up and in its place Oreiur near Tiruchirapalli was to be the new centre of the district. Its church and house were to stand where formerly Father B. da Costa had a chapel. But on that spot a temple now stood. Father de Britto, whose name is mentioned once, had this difficulty removed and from the governor, a royal prince, obtained permission to build there. Now Father Besse, in his ('La Mission du Maduré, 23, 92') speaks of another annual letter dated 31st. May 1689, in which Father de Mello recounting the events of the last two years, refers to the above event but does not mention the name of Father de Britto. Moreover, Father de Besse says the prince's permission to build was given on the 6th July, 1688. It would seem, therefore, that either Father Bertrand or another has added to the letter of 1686 the part in question from the letter of 1688 and attached the name of Father de Britto thereto.

TENTH CHAPTER.

In Marava, 1686.

The realm of Marava was bounded on the north by the State of Tanjore; on the west and south by that of Madura; and on the east by the Bay of Bengal; its sea-board included the part of the Fishery Coast lying between the river Vaypar and Pamben Point.[1] Marava was tributary to the Raja of Madura but was frequently in open revolt against its feudal lord. Its climate is described as unhealthy by missionaries; it was especially so after the monsoon, when fever and dysentry made their appearance devastatingly. This was probably due to much stagnant water. During the monsoon the rain-water collected in large and small pools and later on was made use of to irrigate rice fields. Over the whole country pool succeeded pool. In earlier centuries great stretches of forest existed there; even at present one comes across belts of forest with those 'thorny trees', about which old missionary records very often speak. In these forests, the Kallars, a robber tribe, had their settlements.

For long Marava had remained quite closed to Christianity. Father Antoine de Proenza appears to have been the first missionary, who in the year 1663 penetrated into the realm from Madura. His preaching met with favourable reception. In the catalogue of the Malabar Province for the year 1667, three churches at least are mentioned and they were regularly visited by a priest from the Fishery Coast. The number of Christians for that year is given as more than a thousand. In 1668 a cruel persecution broke out; with fire and sword the Christians and their possessions were attacked. Since that time no missionary had dared venture to make his way into that wild country. Those Christians, who survived the persecution, came now and then to Kandelur and to other missionary stations in the neighbourhood of the State's frontier, to attend divine service and to receive the sacraments. In the State itself catechists, full of zeal, worked for souls and with success. In a letter written in 1683, we read that Father d'Abreu in a journey along the borders of the State came across more than four thousand Christians.

Father de Britto first came to Marava in 1662 when travelling eastwards from Madura on his way to Topo. On his way back, he did part of his travelling on board aship and the rest on land through

(1) See map of the old Madura Mission; Besse, La Mission du Maduré.

Marava. Four years later he made his way there again but this time with the view of devoting a longer spell of time to the work of conversion among those forsaken people. Because of the great dangers involved, endeavours were made to persuade him to abandon the enterprise. One older and very experienced missionary entreated him not to place his life in jeopardy in order to attempt the impossible; Father de Britto only answered he was firmly determined to go to Marava; he did not ask whether it was possible or impossible; to him it was a matter of how best to set his plan at work.

Leaving from Kumbakonam, he reached the State of Marava on the 5th of May 1686. His labours there seem to have been limited, provisionally, to the northern half of the State. He mostly dwelt in the forests, where, from far and near and under the protection of the Kallars, the Christians assembled, listened to his instructions, attended the holy Sacrifice and received the sacraments. During the little more than two months, which elapsed before his imprisonment, he baptised two thousand and seventy catechumens and heard the confessions of all, who could come to him. About the place where he stayed, only a little can be determined with certainty. The Kallars of Panangudi trace the conversion of their fore-fathers back to Father de Britto, who for more than two months lived in the forests that surround their village. A place called Velleikulam, not far from Panangudi, is also mentioned; several of the letters, which Father de Britto wrote to the Carmelite missionary, Father Pietro Paolo de San Francisco, are dated from there.

On the 17th of July he said Mass at Velleikulam and set out on the way to Mel Mangalam lying four miles south-west of Panganeri. While going there he was arrested. In a letter, dated the 30th of July, to the Provincial, Father Emanuel Rodriguez, Father de Britto briefly describes the incident and the events of the following day. "On the day of Saint Alexius, the 17th of July, as I was on the way to Mel Mangalam, I fell into the hands of the chief minister of Marava, whose name is Kumara Pillay. From me and my fellow travellers he took all that we had brought with us. Then he demanded that we should call upon Shiva, one of their chief gods; he would then give our property back to us, overwhelm us with honour and give us permission to preach the Law of God; to me in particular he promised a horse as a present. All of us, I and my six fellow-travellers, answered we could not call upon that name. Thereupon he had me beaten and fettered and bound to the stump of a tree, where I had to remain all through the night and up to two o'clock

in the afternoon of the following day. But my fellow-travellers, especially Siluvai, one of my catechists, and Sooran were most cruelly lacerated on the shoulders and the breast, and then tied to a tree as I was. On the following day they had to endure the torture of water-punishment, after which a fresh scourging followed. One of them, who had carried provisions for me, denied the Faith and received his freedom. But at the command of the minister the soldiers took us to Kodiarkoil*, a neighbouring fortress. With the utmost cruelty they there ill-treated Sooran anew; he bore all with the courage of a martyr. After that we were all condemned to be hacked to pieces. They immediately began with the preparations and placed the fire, the pincers and other instruments ready at hand; but, as night intruded itself upon the scene, the carrying out of the sentence was postponed. Fetters were again fastened on us: for me on both hands and feet; for the others only on the feet; and they threw us into a narrow prison, where we remained till the 28th of July. Then they removed us to Pagani**, where on account of hunger and thirst we arrived half dead. Kumara again threatened to kill us if we did not call upon Shiva. As we refused, we were ill-treated by being kicked, fisticuffed and beaten with rods, and finally placed in irons again. In the meantime the minister went to the Raja to obtain confirmation of the death-sentence, and we hourly await the answer. We are resigned to the holy will of God and are quite happy that He deems us worthy of the grace to be able to offer our lives for the holy Faith. I beg your Reverence to bless me and I entreat all the Fathers to recommend me to God in order that He may bestow on me this last favour that I remember all of you in Heaven.

Your son in Christ,
John,
condemned to death for Christ."

30th July, 1686.

From other sources we are able to complete Father de Britto's short account. Further details are at hand in the annual report about the events of the year 1686, which Father Ludovic de Mello sent to Father Karl von Noyelles, the General of the Order. Father de Mello having entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Lisbon in the same year in which Father de Britto departed for India, came to India in 1680, and in 1682 was attached to the Mission of Madura, where with and under Father de Britto he worked most fruitfully. On the 4th of February 1691, exactly two years before

*Now Kalaiyarkoil or Kalaiyarkovil

** Now Paganeri.

the heroic death of Father de Britto, he sacrificed his life as a martyr of the Mission; for, he died in consequence of the violent treatment he had endured at the hands of his enemies for the Faith.[1] In his report Father de Mello relates that, at the first cross-examination before Kumara Pillay, Father de Britto, in addition to his refusal to call upon Shiva, asserted that he worshipped only the one true God, the Creator of all things. Where Father de Mello mentions the water-punishment, which, according to him, all had to endure, Father de Britto included, he describes it briefly: "Near a pool over a well, the victim was drawn up on high by a rope fastened to his arm and wound round a windlass; suddenly the unfortunate victim would be made to fall with his whole weight into the water, where he remained till he was near to drowning; then he would be pulled up again and the same torture would be repeated." From Father de Mello we also come to know the name of the fellow-traveller, who proved faithless; he was called Sathiyanathan Chetty; and that Father de Britto sought to excuse him; for, overpowered by the terrible pains, Sathiyanathan Chetty had involuntarily rather than deliberately called upon the god Shiva.

In Kalaiyarkoil Father de Britto was hung up on two ropes; with one of them his feet were tied to a high tree while with the other his hands were fastened to another tree; for a long time he was left in this position. The ropes cut deeply into his hands and feet. During the eleven days that these confessors of the Faith spent in the prison of Kalaiyarkoil, they received as nourishment only a handful of rice once a day.

In Paganeri where he resided, Kumara Pillay took part daily in the torturing. Full of rage over the steadfastness of Father de Britto and of his Christians, he threw himself upon them and struck them. Father de Britto received the first blow on his cheek and immediately offered the other cheek to the ruthless tyrant, who momentarily taken aback could not conceal his astonishment; but his savagery naturally served his underlings as an incentive to treat the prisoners all the more cruelly.

The sentence, which the minister or dewan passed, after the renewal of the refusal of the Christians to call upon Shiva, was in keeping with the decrees previously proclaimed against the preaching and the following of the Gospel. First the hands and feet of the Father and of the catechists were to be cut off and afterwards the victims were to be impaled upon a stake; then from the other Christians a foot, a hand, the ears, the nose and

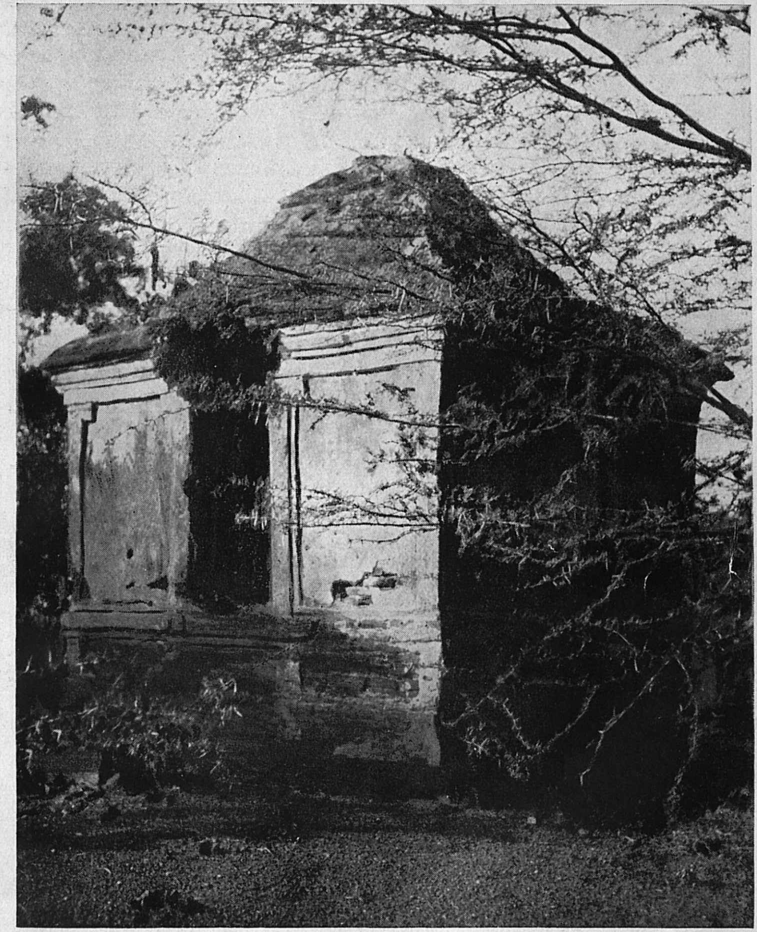
(1) Franco, Annus gloriosus etc. 57 ff.

tongue were to be cut off and, when thus mutilated, the sufferers were to be sent back to their families. All heard this sentence joyously; they began to sing hymns and to say the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and other prayers to prepare themselves for the final conflict. Their tormentors interrupted them, dragged them out of prison and flogged them till they bled; they then took Father de Britto to a spot, which is pointed out in the neighbourhood of the village even at present. On that spot, there was a large stone with many sharp edges and spikey points; it rose only slightly above the ground and upon it the sun burned down all day long. Eight torturers stripped him and for long rolled him to and fro upon the burning sharp-pointed stone; finally, when they had grown weary of their cruel pastime, they left him as an entire wound lying in the heat of the sun, without the slightest shadow of shelter against the burning rays until evening drew on.[1]

After this horrible punishment Father de Britto was again brought to prison.[2] A few days later permission was obtained from the Raja to carry out the sentence. The torturers arrived with a block, a hatchet to hew the limbs off from their victims and stakes to impale them upon. Only Kumara Pillay was awaited, who had to be present as the presiding witness. But death was not to come. Just when Kumara was getting ready to leave his house to attend the brutal scene, a royal messenger informed him that a conspiracy against the life of the Raja had been discovered and that he with his soldiers should forthwith come to the palace of the Raja. Over this startling information Kumara forgot the prisoners and thought only of hastening to the help of the Raja as soon as possible. Father de Britto and his companions knew nothing of this and with yearning awaited their martyrdom; but they saw their

(1) Paganeri is nine miles n. n. w. from Kalaiyarkoil as the crow flies. The site, where the torture took place, is now in the compound of a rich chetty, and is surrounded by a wall of about six to seven feet high. It is not a large, single stone but a barren piece of ground, consisting mainly of torn, fissured red laterite, whose surface is most irregular. Father J. B. Winiger, S. J., who visited the spot in November 1932, met no one able to locate the precise spot on the rugged surface where the torture took place. He found the worst portion of the surface to be a piece of about nine square yards, very torn, fissured, rough and sharp; and he believes it probable that this spot and no other is what has been called the stone, upon which Father de Britto suffered.

(2) Father Besse in his 'La Mission du Maduré' p. 272, says that close to the place of torture is a temple. To one side of it is a tank, which, according to tradition held by Christians and heathens alike, was blessed by Father de Britto. A pagan woman seeing him almost dying of thirst had brought him some water from the tank. He foretold the tank would never dry up, and to this blessing tradition ascribes the fact that not even in seasons of the severest drought does its water-supply fail and that the rice fields irrigated by it always yield a good return.



Paganeri – Deserted Temple near scene of torture.

A voice in stone telling of the extraordinary influence the martyred missionary still has over the minds of the heathen. How eloquently this witness enshrines his memory!

Site of torture on rocky surface.

Raja's stable used as Father de Britto's prison.

The broken area straight before the poised Indian is the probable spot where Father de Britto was rolled up and down. All the plot is of red laterite, very fissured and sharp. The wall in the background encircles the whole plot. To the extreme left is a hay-stack. The stable at Ramnad sheltered elephants as well as horses.

executioners withdraw, and in this uncertainty as to their fate they were left for the next twenty days.

Here we must add the detailed deposition[1] made after the death of Father de Britto by Mariathasan, who was the son of Siluvai Nayakkar, one of the catechists tortured along with Father de Britto. He relates the following : "At that time I lived with my father, Siluvai Nayakkar, who was a catechist of Father de Britto's. It was in July 1686. Father Arulanandar[2] was on his way from the church of Saint Mary Magdalen in Velleikulam to Mel Mangalam, when by order of Kumara Pillay, the dewan, he, along with my father and with another catechist by the name of Ranagappan and two recent converts Sooran and Sathiyanathan Chetty, was seized. They were led to Codiarcoil and shut up in a dark dungeon. At first the dewan made great promises to Father Arulanandar if he would offer sacrifice to the god Shiva, who stands in especial esteem among the heathen of this land. With indignation the Father rejected the proposal. Kumara then had the two recent converts led away and beaten with rods ; Sathiyanathan was utterly terrified after he had received a few strokes and offered sacrifice to the god. Sooran, who was highly esteemed in the whole State, showed more courage ; but, as they struck him without mercy, continually calling upon him to offer sacrifice to Shiva, he begged that they would allow him first to consult Father Arulanandar. This was granted. After a short interview with the Father, Sooran returned to Kumara Pillay and made it clear to him he would rather die than perform an idolatrous act. They tortured him anew till he sank upon the ground in a swoon. Some thought he was dead ; others that he was only feigning. To convince themselves Kumara ordered a burning torch to be held to the sole of his foot. Sooran now gave signs of life and was brought back to prison in chains. Shortly afterwards Kumara Pillay left orders that Father Arulanandar with the other prisoners should be taken to Pagani. There they spent the night in prison ; at day-break Father Arulanandar was handed over to the torturers. These tore his garments from his body and laid him on a large flat stone, which was so heated by the sun that one could hardly touch it with the hand. The ruthless tyrants turned him on to one side and then on to the other, and tormented him till his body was as though roasted ; they then took him back to prison. Now the turn came for my father. They roasted him as they had done to Father Arulanandar ; after that

(1) See the Acts of Beatification.

(2) The Tamil equivalent for John. It was and is customary for missionaries of Madura to adopt a Tamil surname.

they began to beat him with rods; and one of his tormentors gave him such a blow on the eye that it came out of its socket; the blood flowed plentifully and the eye hung down on the cheek. His torturers had pity on him and went to Kumara Pillay to inform him of what had happened. He declared that, if the Sanniyasi in the dungeon restored the eye, he would acknowledge that his religion was the true one. 'That depends on the will of God', said my father, 'and, so far as I am concerned, I am ready to sacrifice not only my eye for the Faith but my life also.' Some heathens, who had looked on with sympathy, informed Father Arulanandar of what they had seen. He said his catechist, Siluvai Nayakkar, was prepared to offer his life up for the Faith. When they brought my father to him, he replaced the eye in its socket, made the sign of the cross over it, and not only did the pain altogether vanish but my father could also immediately see as well as before. When Kumara Pillay heard that, he had him brought to him forthwith and, as the sun had already set, ordered him to read a few lines by lamp-light; he covered the other eye with his hand and was astonished, when he perceived my father could read with ease. Kumara then asserted Father Arulanandar was but a sorcerer. All this was told to me by my father and by Sooran and the catechists, who were all eye-witnesses and shared the same dungeon with the Father."

The latter firmly believed the torments would end in martyrdom; in his letter to the Provincial, Father Emanuel Rodriguez, he had even signed himself as 'condemned to death for the Faith.' But in reality that would come to pass, which with prophetic spirit the youngest of his fellow-sufferers had foretold. "My son, what wilt thou do when they shall torture thee? Art thou ready to die with me?" Father de Britto had asked of him. "Neither you shall die on this occasion nor I," replied the boy. "You shall return to your Fatherland and only after your return home hither shall your head be cut from you!"

At-last the orders came to remove the prisoners from Paganeri to the Court of Ragunathathevar, the Raja at Ramanadburam, the present Ramnad. With bare feet they had to traverse the long stretch of eighteen miles to the capital and often had to do so at a running pace. Father de Britto was reduced to such a pitiable condition that even the idolators had compassion on him. On reaching Ramnad, all were at first lodged in a horse-stable and later in a narrow, dirty dungeon. Brahmins and idolatrous priests came in large numbers to dispute with and mock at Father de Britto because they believed that, as he was so weakened, they could easily vanquish him. But the grace of God gave strength to the sufferer;

he spoke so forcibly and exposed the truth of the Catholic religion with such palpable proofs that these proud, learned men were obliged to acknowledge even in the presence of the Raja that, "although this guru attacks our teaching and our ceremonies yet one cannot deny that he expounds principles holy and ennobling and wholly conformable to reason."

Such an avowal astounded the Raja; he grew interested and wanted to know more about the life of this foreign Sanniyasi and had him brought to the palace. With courtesy and reverence he received Father de Britto and bade him set himself down by his side, and requested him to declare what he taught his disciples. Father de Britto began by saying he preached the true God, the Almighty Lord, to whom all reverence and adoration were due and that the deities, which the heathens worshipped, were vain and paltry inventions of the human mind. The Raja turned to his entourage and said: "This courage pleases me. With such frankness one should always speak! Men of character ought never to forget that!". On enquiring from Father de Britto what he further taught about the Law of God, Father de Britto briefly explained the Ten Commandments, spoke about their holiness and made clear their importance for human society as well as the necessity of their observance. What he said pleased the Raja, who exclaimed: "This is a perfect law!" Having spoken next on the attributes of God, Father de Britto again insisted upon the obligation all men had to obey the Law of God. Kumara Pillay now took part in the conversation. He feared what Father de Britto had said was making a deep impression on the Raja. So he asked the Father: "Why dost thou not invoke our Shiva?" Father de Britto replied: "The followers of Brahma call upon Brahma; those of Vishnu, upon Vishnu; those of Shiva, upon Shiva; I acknowledge the Creator of Heaven and of Earth as true God; upon Him alone I call!" "Art thou a Feringhi," interposed the Raja, "or a Dutchman or what? The colour of thy face shows thou art a foreigner!" "I belong," replied Father de Britto, "to a Society of learned, worthy and distinguished men; their teaching is noble, their thoughts are pure and chaste. As messengers of the true God, they go into the whole world to make known His holy Law." "And do people acknowledge this Law on the other side of our sea?" enquired the Raja. "Certainly," the reply ran, "the whole world, that has heard it, has accepted it; it binds all men; it is appointed for all peoples; it makes known to all the one God, to whom all must pray." "Once more I affirm thou art in truth a real and an upright guru!" exclaimed the Raja.

These words alarmed Kumara Pillay and the Brahmins. They trumped up their old accusation again that the followers of this guru refused to pray to Shiva. "This Sanniyasi may or may not call upon Shiva," retorted the Raja, "that is no concern of yours. How can you demand that a man, who acknowledges so noble a Law, should accept your dreamings ? What has truth to do with error ?" This was well said. But, as so often happens, it was too hard for the Raja to surrender himself to the will of God. We know from a letter of the Provincial, Father Emanuel Rodriguez, to the General of the Order, that the Raja was much addicted to drink. His flatterers sought to justify his intemperance by affirming it was an offering made to Shiva. Among the Rajas and the Chiefs of India polygamy was the accepted custom; the Raja of Marava was no exception to the prevalent rule ; furthermore, throughout his realm robbery flourished ; the robber caste was very numerous there and to this caste the Raja belonged. Hence the life, the Raja led and wanted to lead, stood opposed to the pure, high-minded teaching of the Gospel. Turning to Father de Britto, he said: "Life and freedom I present to thee and to thy disciples arrested with thee. All of you can remain in my realm and pray to your God and live according to your Law. But I forbid you to preach your religion to my subjects. A religion, that does not allow of polygamy nor of robbery nor of idolatry, cannot suit us. If you will preach it, preach it elsewhere. And, if in spite of my prohibition (and he repeated these words three times), you proceed to preach it in my territory, then I will seize you and have your hearts torn from the breast."[1]

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(1) A short time before the imprisonment of Father de Britto, a Carmelite, Pietro Paolo de San Francisco, later on Vicar Apostolic of Bombay and of whom mention has been made in Chapter the Sixth, came to the coastal region of Marava accompanied by two Indian priests of Malabar. He did not know the language of the country and on account of his dress and manner of living was immediately recognised as a Feringhi. From Marava he went to Negapatam and stayed with the Dutch colony. In June 1686 he wrote to Father de Britto and complained about the discourteous behaviour of a catechist of Father de Britto's in Tondi. Father Emanuel Rodriguez, the Provincial of the Malabar Province, writing to the General of the Order on the 2nd of August 1686, informs the General of the imprisonment of Father de Britto and connects his arrest with the Carmelite's visit to the Marava coast. In addition to this letter there are two letters still extant and dating from the 4th of September 1686, written by Antonio Silveira de Soares, the Administrator of the diocese of Cochin : one of them is to Pope Innocent XI ; the other is to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda. Silveira de Soares complains about Father Pietro Paolo de San Francisco. In the diocese of Cochin Father Pietro Paolo had made himself guilty of transactions against Canon Law ; after that he had travelled in the realm of Marava, and had appeared there as a European and as the friend of the Dutch, and was the cause why the Raja of Marava had forbidden the preaching of the Gospel in his realm. From the information given to the Raja about the Carmelite and his doings, it is obvious that the Raja also took Father de Britto for a Feringhi or European and for the future forbade him to preach in Marava.

As the Raja had, nevertheless, dismissed him with marks of esteem, Father de Britto still entertained the hope that the prohibition would be repealed. Under the pretext of wishing to express his gratefulness once more to the Raja, he sought to gain admittance into the palace. But the Brahmins contrived to prevent that. So there was nothing left for him but to leave Marava for the present and to await better times. Punishment from God did not fail to overtake both the Raja and his dewan. From a letter written by Father de Britto to his brother, Fernão, on the 22nd of September 1692, we learn that the Raja was first of all deprived of his realm by the Raja of Madura ; then Ekoji, the Raja of Tanjore, came to his assistance and drove the conqueror out but kept half of Marava for himself ; the minister or general, as Father de Britto calls him, was accused with his brother of high treason and found guilty. Both of them suffered the same death-penalty to which the minister had condemned Father de Britto.[1]

Having been set free in August 1686, Father de Britto may have intended to return to Madura. But a letter from the Provincial called him to Topo. Accompanied by his two catechists and some Christians, he at once set out probably by the overland route. We can easily imagine with what reverence and love the courageous confessor of the Faith was received by his Superior and his religious Brethren. The Provincial detained him in the residence at Topo to rest himself from the labours of his severe apostolic life and to recover from the recent sufferings he had endured. During his stay Father de Britto ever felt urged to return as soon as possible to his beloved Mission and with his Brethren there to share once more in the hardships of missionary life. After he was sufficiently set up again, the Provincial allowed him to leave for his field of labour.

The apostle joyously departed but, after a few days on his journey, was unexpectedly recalled to Topo. Information had been received there, which set at nought all the immediate wishes and the plans, Father de Britto had , it was the news of the death of Father Francis Paes. In the year previous the Malabar Province had chosen this Father as its Procurator and had sent him to Europe. In the neighbourhood of the Cape of Good Hope, the ship, on which he voyaged, was wrecked ; but, though he was able to reach the coast, he succumbed soon to the extreme hardships, which he had to suffer there. In his stead another had to be sent to Europe as Procurator, and in Topo the Provincial and his consultors believed

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(1) Fernão, Historia do nascimento etc. p. 244.

Father de Britto was most suited for this office. He not only enjoyed high esteem at the royal court of Portugal but could well represent the interest of the Mission there ; for nearly twelve years he had worked in India both as a missionary and as a Superior, and from his own experience was qualified to express an opinion on the conditions in and on the needs of the Mission. When the Provincial informed him of what had been decided in his regard, Father de Britto was quite taken aback ; he may very likely have laid before the Provincial, as is permissible a religious by virtue of his rule, his reasons why it were better not to take his person into consideration ; he may also have entreated most urgently to grant his request to return to his recently converted and cherished Maravars ; but the Provincial abided by his decision and Father de Britto obeyed. After the necessary arrangements had been completed, he undertook the journey to Goa in 1686.[1] Scarcely had he arrived in Goa than he had to go aboard the ship, which lay prepared already to leave for and to take him to Portugal. On the same ship, Francis Tavora, an old friend of Father de Britto's, whose term of office as Viceroy had expired, sailed for Lisbon.[2] The voyage was a happy one across the Indian Ocean but, after rounding the Cape of Good Hope, storms forced them to set sail for Brazil, where they landed at the port of Santos. Father de Britto stayed at the Jesuit college there till the ship left for Portugal. She reached the

(¹) Father Boero as well as Father Prat postpones his departure from Topo and his arrival in Goa till towards the end of 1687 ; this is probably wrong. With regard to his departure, one in no way gains the impression from the records still extant that Father de Britto had stayed for over a year at Topo. It would rather seem that, after a few months rest, he was already on his way to Marava but was presently recalled and appointed Procurator. "As he was on the point of returning to Marava the Superiors sent him to Europe," says Father Lainez (Lettres édifiantes, Paris, 1781, 4). Moreover, it is hard to understand how the General of the Order, as a matter of fact, should have in March 1689 so much insisted on the immediate return voyage of Father de Britto if the Father should only have arrived in Lisbon in September 1688. The interval between would have been all too short for the recovery from the long voyage or for the despatch of manifold business and for the preparation of the return voyage. Finally, it is definitely sure that this voyage to Europe took place on the same ship that brought Francis Tavora, the Viceroy of Goa, home. The latter left Goa on the 15th of December 1686 (cf. Danvers, the Portuguese in India ii. London, 1894, p. 370). Father Lainez also says in a letter written in 1693 that Father de Britto had arrived in Lisbon at the end of 1687 (Lettres édifiantes X 4). Similarly Monsieur Francois Martin declares : "The Father reached Europe in 1687." (Examiner, Bombay, 1909, p. 253).

(²) His stay in Goa must have been very short, since the royal ship put out to sea on the 15th of December. As to his dealing with the Junta in Goa, which Father Prat writes about, there can be no question. The instructions, which Father Prat quotes, are those with which Father Freire sent Father de Britto to Topo in 1682. No manuscript sources inform us that the Provincial had appointed Father de Britto or any body else to undertake transactions with the Junta in Goa.

mouth of the river Tagus on the 8th of September 1687 and cast anchor off Lisbon. Most warmly welcomed by his Brethren, Father de Britto took up his residence in the college of Saint Antony, in which, as a young Scholastic, he had been engaged in teaching.

(¹) Fernão, Historia do nascimento etc, ch. 30.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Again in Europe, 1687-1690.

Shortly before the arrival of the ship that brought Father de Britto to Portugal, the news was conveyed by another ship of the imprisonment and the cruel torments that he had undergone. Father Emanuel Rodriguez, the Provincial, had sent the letter, which Father de Britto had written to him from his prison in Paganeri, to his Brethren in Portugal. When the news now spread in Lisbon that the brave confessor himself had arrived with the royal ship, the whole city was filled with joyous excitement. All wanted to see him, who had been tortured for the Faith, and to manifest to him their reverence and admiration. In his humility Father de Britto would fain have withdrawn from all publicity but he could not escape and was obliged to appear at the royal Court.

In the year 1667 and in the place of King Alfonso VI, Pedro, his younger brother, had begun to act as regent. When Alfonso died in 1683, Pedro ruled as king. Deeply religious, he had at heart the welfare of his people. His special interest was devoted to the Missions in those countries, in which Portugal still had colonies. He supported them most generously; all that the colonies brought of revenue to the kingdom was applied by him, as he stated in a letter to Pope Alexander VIII, to the upkeep of the missionaries and their catechists.[1] It was becoming, therefore, that Father de Britto should in person express to the king the thanks of the Mission.

On his part Pedro II awaited with longing the day, when his former playmate and page would present himself before him and the queen. Just then the royal family were absent from Lisbon; they were staying at their castle in Salvaterra in Estremadura not far from the capital. Upon Father de Britto's request an audience was immediately granted. At his entrance into the palace, the ministers of the king, several of whom had been brought up with him as royal pages, welcomed him most heartily. The king, who had already caught sight of his friend from the stairs, could hardly master his impatience and from afar called to him by name. Full of reverence the missionary approached and wanted to bend his knee to kiss the hand of his sovereign. But Pedro at once embraced him and led him to his chamber, where for a long time they re-

(1) Franco, Synopsis annal., 425.

mained alone. These true friends had much to talk about; it was their first meeting after more than fourteen years. The king then presented the friend of his boyhood to the queen, who in that year had been wedded to him. She was Maria Sophia, a daughter of William, Count of the Palatinate. With marks of the greatest respect she received Father de Britto and requested the favour of being given holy Communion from his hand during Mass on the following day. After this first interview Father de Britto had often to appear at Court to give more detailed accounts of the Mission of Madura, and of Malabar, and to discuss with the king and his ministers questions concerning the Indies and the missions of India.

During his sojourn in Portugal and even while at Court, Father de Britto altered nothing in his usual way of living. Only once a day he partook of food and contented himself with some rice, vegetables and water, even when at the royal table. A plank or a bear's skin spread out on the ground served him as a bed. Some fifteen years later Archbishop Telles wrote to Pope Clement XI: "We have noticed how when invited by us to dinner with Count de Marialva, the king's minister, the venerable missionary partook of only a little vegetable and some fruit." When urged by his friends to make use of his stay in Europe to recuperate his strength, Father de Britto would only answer: "My Brethren in Madura with their toilsome labours and journeyings in the burning heat of the sun in the Tropics lead a still harder life than I do; they are, moreover, continually exposed to dangers and to persecutions; if needs be they would sacrifice their health and their lives; how can I then have things better than they? What would Saint Ignatius and Saint Francis Xavier, what would my Lord and Master, the Saviour, say if after I had placed the chalice to my lips, I should not show courage enough to drain it to the dregs?"

As Procurator of his Province it was incumbent on Father de Britto to journey to Rome personally to give the General of the Order an exact account of the state of the Province, which he represented. But the king set himself against this journey. Fernão de Britto believed he knew the grounds for this opposition. Innocent XI had ordered, he said, that every missionary, who went to Rome, had to bind himself under oath to place himself under the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Whether such an order of Pope Innocent XI existed or not, we cannot say. During the time of Pope Innocent XI we find only two decrees, in which an oath was prescribed to missionaries, but they have no bearing upon our case; for, they demanded an oath of obedience from all missionaries, who were sent to Indo-China. In any case so much

is sure the Portuguese Colonial Government was afraid that a visit to Rome by Father de Britto might do harm to their rights, and all the more so, as Pope Innocent XI was considered to be a very decided defender of the rights of the Apostolic See.

The Portuguese Crown was jealously careful of preserving the privileges, which it had been accorded by the Popes. From the time of Martin V (1417-31) and in the course of subsequent years, Portugal, on account of her great services in the spreading of the Faith, had acquired a privileged position. No Bishop could be appointed in India and in China without the consent of the king of Portugal. He had also the right to propose candidates for ecclesiastical dignities and benefices ; it was only with his approbation that missionaries could go to India, China and Japan, and they had to voyage there on Portuguese ships and by way of Lisbon. But with these privileges the Crown had also undertaken the obligation to protect the Catholic religion and its apostles, to assist in the spreading of the Gospel and to provide the pecuniary means needed for episcopal sees, seminaries and cathedral chapters. But these privileges accorded the king were valid in general only for those regions, which came under the Portuguese Crown. When to other Powers, especially to the Dutch, Portugal lost many of her possessions in India and in the Far East and could not fulfil her obligations because she had grown more and more impoverished, the basis of the agreement with the Holy See was altered. In the seventeenth century the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith came into being in Rome and gradually gained in influence. Between the Congregation and the Portuguese Colonial Government many a friction resulted. Portugal was bent upon asserting her privileged position ; while the Roman See endeavoured to restrict the claims of Portugal to what was strictly due. In this difficult situation Father de Britto wrote for advice to Father Thyrsus Gonzalez, who shortly before, on the 6th of July 1687, had been elected General. In a written reply the latter permitted Father de Britto to remain away from Rome and to execute his affairs with Rome in writing. From the beginning the transactions, which Father de Britto had to undertake with the Portuguese Government, took a favourable course. Among other things the Government promised to do more for the support of missionaries and for the maintenance of catechists, whose active co-operation, especially in the Madura Mission, was of so great importance.

Father de Britto could now think more about beginning his work of recruiting subjects for his Mission from among the houses of the Order. With this in view he began to travel and, first of

all, visited the chief educational establishments of the Jesuits to win from among their young members able co-workers for the distant missionary field. So he went to Santarem, where he stayed only for a short time, and then went on to Coimbra, the famous University town, where he had made his studies of Philosophy and had addressed to the Father General his two petitions to be sent to the Indian Mission. Filled with enthusiasm the Fathers and Scholastics of Coimbra listened to the distinguished missionary, who appeared among them dressed as a Pandaram-Swami and spoke about the manifold joys and sorrows of missionary life in Madura. His descriptions made a profound impression upon his hearers, who were prepared for sacrifice ; many came to him and declared themselves willing to follow him to the Mission and there to share with him and his Brethren in their happiness and suffering ; they would not shrink from whatever missionary life should exact of them ; his very descriptions of that life of self-sacrifice had but strengthened their courageous decision all the more. A large number wrote to the General of the Order and besought him in touching entreaty to be sent to the Mission of Madura. On the lay-students, too, the inspiring words, which the apostle addressed to them, made no less a deep impression. One young student, who also bore the name of John de Britto and subsequently voyaged to India with the Father in 1690, says in a letter to the Father General, which is still extant and is dated the 10th of December 1695, that in his youth he had heard from many of how thousands of heathens had been converted to the Catholic Church by the most venerable Father de Britto and that under the influence of grace he had thereupon decided to enter the Society of Jesus and to ask for the Indian Mission.

From Coimbra Father de Britto travelled to Porto, where he met with the same enthusiastic welcome. All his Brethren there, even the old Fathers, wished to be permitted to wash his feet. His humility struggled against granting such a request but he had to yield to pressure and allowed two Brothers to perform this service of love. When these saw the deep traces and the scars, which the irons and chains had left upon his feet, they were deeply moved and kissed the marks of the wounds he had received for the Faith. Hardly had it become known in the city that the great missionary had arrived than the Bishop, with his Chapter and the Civil dignitaries of the city, hastened to show their reverence and admiration. From Porto Father de Britto returned to Coimbra and within the circle of his own Religious Brethren celebrated Christmas there.

Evora, too, where he had made a part of his studies, desired to see him within her walls. There, as everywhere else, his words awakened lively enthusiasm for the Mission of Madura. Father Franco, later on one of the first historians of the Society of Jesus in Portugal, was then studying at Evora. He has left us evidence of the deep impression that the presence of the missionary in Evora produced upon the Professors and the students. "All of us," he writes, "who then stayed in Evora, saw the eminent man, about whose doings the Annual Letters of our Society had told us so much. We enjoyed the great happiness of greeting such an esteemed guest. How inspiring it was to listen to him, as he in the dress of a Pandaram-Swami told us in our house-chapel of the sacrifices and labours of our Brethren in distant Madura. We heard him several times and were never tired of listening to his words. His style in speaking was simple, his manner extraordinarily amiable, his friendliness cordial and winning. His virtue had nothing gloomy about it but attracted by its gentleness. Already then we surmised he would one day be numbered among the saints."[1] Father Franco also records that the servant, who was wont to accompany Father de Britto on his journeys and to serve him at Mass, had through his son, a priest, informed him later on that during Mass he had frequently seen Father de Britto raised from the ground and that through the Father's prayers many sick had been miraculously healed.

So far we have said nothing about the visits of Father de Britto to his relatives. His mother, Donna Beatrix, lived in retirement at Portalegre. Very soon after the news of her son's arrival in Portugal had made its way to her, she wrote telling him how much she yearned to see him after so long a separation, and added the request that, as she on account of her age and failing health could scarcely come to Lisbon, would he make a re-union possible either at Portalegre or elsewhere in the neighbourhood ? He immediately answered he would meet her wishes no sooner it was possible and begged her for the present to send him her blessing.

His sister, Donna Luiza Maria, was the first among his relatives to whom he paid a visit. She had married the Count of Pinheiro and lived in her castle at Pinheiro Grande. On his journey from Santarem to Coimbra Father de Britto came to the little town of Colegam, from whence in less than an hour Pinheiro Grande could be reached. His companion drew his attention to the fact that from Colegam it was not far to the castle of his sister. Father de Britto

(1) Franco, Annus gloriosus etc. p. 57.

replied he thought of going there on his way back and added he must first go to Coimbra as he had come to Portugal not on account of his relatives but to gain co-workers for his mission. His companion, an older and highly esteemed priest, sought, however, to persuade him to lay aside this scruple ; the visit, he said, did not at all stand in the way of perfection ; it was much rather a duty of love. Father de Britto yielded but on this occasion stayed only for a very short time with his sister.

Not long afterwards his mother, Donna Beatrix, paid a visit to her daughter at Pinheiro castle. While at the castle she had the great happiness of seeing her son when, shortly after Christmas on his return from Coimbra to Lisbon, he came to Pinheiro Grande. What a meeting again, what must that mother's heart have felt when her son recounted to her what he had been able to do and to suffer for God in the Mission of Madura ! In her happiness she now felt something of that sweet reward, which God gives to parents, who make the sacrifice of their dearest. All too brief was this first visit but Donna Beatrix could cherish the hope this would not be the last meeting. Before long, after Father de Britto had visited the college of Evora, he went to see her at Portalegre whither she had returned from Pinheiro Grande.

This journey took him through Montforte, where Fernão, his only surviving brother, resided. From childhood on, the two brothers had been very intimate. "My brother and lord," so wrote Father de Britto on the 25th of May 1688 in reply to a letter of Fernão's, "thou canst imagine what joy thy letter hath afforded me ! For thou knowest how much I have always loved thee ! May God in His mercy grant that we love each other so for all Eternity !" And how affectionately Fernão was attached to his brother, every line of his book on his brother's labours and virtues bears witness to. It was at Montforte then that they again saw each other after the lapse of fourteen years. But, as Father de Britto wanted to reach Portalegre to see his mother before nightfall, he took leave of Fernão after a few hours. While on his way a heavy thunder-storm burst. His companion, Father Cardoso, the Chancellor of the University of Evora, requested him not to continue the journey farther. But, accustomed in India to set all inclemency of the weather at defiance, Father de Britto did not want to be dissuaded from continuing. With decision Father Cardoso then declared that, even if Father de Britto should prefer to continue his journey, for his part he would return to Montforte and stay with a certain Fernão de Britto. Good humouredly Father de Britto gave way and both

went back to Fernão's residence till the next morning, when they again set out for Portalegre.

This visit of his to his aged mother probably took place shortly previous to his departure for India. With her he spent several days but put up with his Brethren in the college close by. During his stay he met with a friend of earlier days, John de Mascarenhas, the Bishop of the town. When he called to see him and knelt to obtain his blessing, the Bishop also threw himself on his knees to receive the blessing of such a herald of the Faith. A lowly contest ensued: neither held himself worthy to raise his hand in blessing; finally, they mutually kissed each other's priestly hand and sat down to intimate conversation.

To Father de Britto keen anguish and sorrow were not spared in Portugal. King Pedro, who learned more and more to prize the prudence and experience of the friend of his youth, began to entertain the thought of not allowing him to return to India but of making him a member of the Council, which had to examine and to look after Indian affairs. He communicated his plan to Father de Britto. What pain must it have caused the heart of that apostle! He knew of but one yearning: to live and to die in his beloved Mission. He tried all he could to make the king change his mind but all in vain. Ever since the day when, on the 22nd of October 1689, a son and heir had been born to him, the king thought all the more earnestly about keeping Father de Britto back in order that later he should direct the education of the little Infanto. In Father de Britto the king found united, and to an eminent degree, all the qualities that were requisite for such a duty; in him were kindliness matched with uprightness, talent joined to experience. But Father de Britto drew the attention of the king to this that there were so many in Europe more suited than he was to the appointment; whereas the Mission of Madura counted but a few labourers; for the life in the Mission he was fitted as he already knew the language and the customs of the country; he therefore begged the king might not force him away from the course upon which God would have him. On the other hand the king represented to Father de Britto how from Lisbon he could work much more for the interests of the Madura Mission; if he were to go back, he would be alone there; but should he remain in Portugal, he could send a number of labourers every year into the vineyard; surely his zeal and his influence would arouse many to offer themselves for the Mission. "Many missionaries are indeed needed by us," replied Father de Britto, "and it is just on that account, to recruit such that I have come back. I am returning to India to encourage such by my

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example. By my mere request they would not be stirred to follow the call to the Mission. I indeed rely upon the zeal of your Majesty; for, when I return, you will certainly continue to remain favourable to the Mission; this I confidently hope for."

Don Pedro, however, was in no way convinced. So, on another occasion, Father de Britto brought it to the notice of the king that he would act against the will of God if he held him back from his Mission. The pious sovereign then summoned his confessor, Father Manuel Fernandes, and Father Sebastian de Magalhaes distinguished for virtue and learning, and proposed to them carefully to prove if it were against the will of God to devote the missionary to important work in Portugal, for which he was pre-eminently qualified, rather than allow him to return to the Mission. After both these Fathers had reflected in prayer before God upon all the matter, they answered it would not be right to force the Father to remain in Portugal. But the king could not make up his mind to relinquish his cherished wish.

What the standpoint was, which Father Thyrsus Gonzalez, the General of the Order, took up on this occasion, we see clearly enough from the letters of that time, which are still extant. Father Gonzalez was much against Father de Britto or any other Father being called to Court and being nominated to the Council for Indian affairs. In a letter to the General, dated the 4th of July 1689, Father de Britto had pointed out the many good results that being at Court and on the Council would produce; that might well be the General agreed; but to him it seemed the difficulties and the dangers, which such a position at Court might entail, were greater than the advantages. How easily, for instance, might envy and jealousy make of the advisors of the king a butt for calumny! and how difficult it would inevitably be to hold themselves entirely aloof from worldly and political affairs! Hence, no sooner the General received information about the purpose of the king than he began to urge that Father de Britto should return as soon as possible to India, and thus withdraw him with one stroke from the dangers of an appointment at Court. On the 15th of March 1689, Father de Britto again wrote to the General that he had received his and the Father Assistant's letters and that he saw from the Assistant's letter that his Superiors wished that he should return to India in that very year; the king, however, to whom he had at once gone to obtain his permission to depart, had requested time for reflection; no sooner he should receive a favourable reply from the king, he would set out on his return to the Mission. On the 20th of March after the royal vessels had already left, Father de Britto

wrote once more to the General that he had already prepared himself for his departure, when a letter from the Secretary of State, Count de Marialva, reached him, the contents of which were that the king did not wish that he should voyage on the ships that were then to leave and for reasons bound up with the welfare of the kingdom; but what these grounds were was not stated. "No sooner I received this letter," he continues, "I went to Father Provincial to ask for advice. He called together his consultors and all were of opinion they had to submit themselves to the king in this instance. So against my wish and my will I must still remain in Portugal for this year. Six Brethren left in March for the Malabar Province; more would have been sent but the ship had not room enough; I hope a greater number will be able to go with me next year to the Mission."

On the 14th of May a reply came from the Father General. He expressed his pain over the king having prevented the Father's return to the Mission; for many reasons his departure would have been desirable to him. On the 4th of July Father de Britto replied: "I also was painfully affected by the decision of the king; for there is nothing I would have wished more than to go to live and to die among my new converts, for whom I have been able to labour and to suffer somewhat already. I have laid before the king very weighty reasons for obtaining from him his permission to depart. He turned my reasons against me saying that these very reasons might have been alleged in order not to send me to Europe and yet, despite all that, the Superiors had destined me for the undertaking. I noticed clearly that I was unable then to alter the opinion of the king and I believed I should refrain from further pressure, particularly as the Secretary of State, Count de Marialva, and other gentlemen of the Court earnestly and repeatedly advised me not to go further against the will of the king. As far as I can, I will, however, take care that the delay in my departure result in no harm to the Malabar Province; for, I hope to take back with me many more Brethren."

Father de Britto now turned his efforts towards the queen and through Father Leopold Fuess, her confessor, besought her to make her influence with the king felt in his favour. But at first Queen Sophia was little inclined to entertain his request; she was also of opinion that it meant great good fortune for their first born prince and for the whole royal family if Father de Britto should remain in Lisbon. However, she finally took upon herself to favour the cause of Father de Britto with the king, who at-length consented to allow the Father to leave; but he yielded partly and only a few days before the departure of the royal ships to India in 1690. For, after

Father de Britto had left for India, King Pedro did not fully relinquish his plan of having the Father as the tutor of the little Infanto and as a member of the Council for India, and turned to the General of the Order with the request to recall the missionary to Europe. The General wrote to Father de Magalhaes, the then confessor of the king, and to Father Fuess, the queen's confessor, and requested both to exercise their influence and to move the king to withdraw from his proposal.

These two letters give splendid testimony to the high opinion, which the Father General entertained of Father de Britto. To Father de Magalhaes he writes that it would not tend to the greater glory of God if he recalled Father de Britto back to Europe; God in His goodness had bestowed on him unusual talents along with magnificent zeal in spreading the Faith and great graces in announcing and winning heathens over to the true religion; skilled as he was in the language and experienced in the customs of Madura, his preaching had brought forth rich fruit there. Then the General goes on to praise the splendid example Father de Britto had given the other missionaries and recalls the sufferings and the tortures that he had endured, and styles him the leader, the captain of the missionary band. A few months later, on the 30th of September 1690, the General writes to Father Fuess: "I would gladly accord the king what he wishes; but, after mature consideration of all the circumstances, I must admit it is more conducive to the glory of God and the welfare of souls and better for the Father himself if he remain in India. The Holy Ghost has destined him, as another Paul, for the conversion of the heathen and has led him back from his Fatherland to Malabar. This vineyard has been handed over to him by God as his field of labour. I hope the king and queen will reconcile themselves to the thought that Father de Britto should remain there. Moreover I do not wish that Father de Britto or any Father of our Order should be appointed as tutor to the Infanto. This is, as I very well know, a thing that brings many dangers with it and out of which many disadvantages to our Order could arise."

On receiving the king's permission to return to India, Father de Britto had at once communicated the glad tidings to his brother Fernão. But the letter bears no date; it was not written before the 9th of March; for, in the same letter mention occurs of the death of Father Francis de Almeida, which took place on the 9th of March. "The king", so he says in this letter, "allows me to depart but he declared he would recall me after two years. I entertain the firm hope that God will not allow that to happen." But to have

thus resisted even the authority of Don Pedro was not the end of the ordeal Father de Britto had to go through. He had now to take leave of his aged mother, his beloved brother and sister. This he did both in person and in writing. His intimate friend, Monsieur Francois Martin, briefly remarks: "Once more his mother and his relatives did their utmost to retain him at home; he resisted all their tender entreaties."[1] On the 18th of March, Father de Britto wrote once again to Fernão to thank him for the gifts he had sent to Lisbon for the Madura Mission, and promises he would never grow remiss in his love for him and expresses the hope to meet him again in their heavenly Fatherland. How deeply he felt the pain of this parting for ever, we see in the whole tone of this letter which, more tenderly than any other, closes thus: "Farewell, my brother; With all my heart, farewell!"

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(1) 'Examiner,' 1909, p. 253.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Back to India, 1690.

About the chief events of this voyage back to India a detailed account exists written by Father Schiedenhofen, who voyaged with Father de Britto, and sent from Goa to the Assistant of the German Province in Rome.[1] In our narrative we follow him.

As the day of departure grew close, every thing was well prepared. Nineteen missionaries were to leave partly for India and partly for Japan and all had to find accommodation on the Capitana or the ship in command, which bore the name of the Apostle, San Diogo. In the lower apartment in the stern of the ship those missionaries, who were destined for Japan, were to be accommodated; while in the upper apartment those were to be lodged, who belonged to the Malabar Province. There was sufficient space for all. But just shortly before the departure a serious hitch arose. Father Sarmento, who had carefully made all arrangements, received a letter from the Father General in Rome, in which it was announced that six or seven fellow-Religious would arrive, who were all destined for China and would have to voyage on this occasion. In case there should be no room on both the ships, then those missionaries allotted to the Malabar Province should yield their places on board aship to the new arrivals and remain in Portugal for another year till the next occasion for voyaging. But Father de Britto, so the General wished, had to depart in any case.

What was to be done? First of all it was not sure the Italians would arrive in Lisbon in good time. If they failed to do so, then the very great expense for the cost of the voyage and for the provisions would have been made in vain; if they did arrive at the right time, then the missionaries would in number mount up to twenty-five or twenty-six, and for all of them there was no room available. It seemed inevitable that a number of those destined for the Malabar Province should remain behind. But again all these, with the exception of Father Schiedenhofen, were Portuguese, and it was feared that the king, who had undergone heavy expense for the Portuguese missionaries and had paid the cost of the voyage for Father de Britto and his companions, would be irritated by this that it was precisely Portuguese subjects, who would be excluded from voyaging on a royal ship in order to make room for foreigners; moreover, the king already viewed with displeasure the

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(1) In possession of the Order.

fact that so many Italians went to the Mission of China. It needed only a hint or a word from Father de Britto to the king or to his ministers to secure a royal command that all the missionaries appointed to the Malabar Province had to sail; but Father de Britto could never have been brought to take such a step.

With a favourable wind the six Italians arrived in Lisbon from Genoa six days before the sailing of the ships and hence quite early enough. There was much hustling to and fro. At length Father de Britto decided on giving up the place allotted him and his companions on board the 'San Diogo' and on seeking accommodation on the second ship or the Almiravia, which bore the name of 'Maria Conceicao.' All the others, however, were unanimous that there was no room aboard that ship for so many and that it was not possible either to find place there for the necessary provisions. To this Father de Britto replied that in any case he with another Father and a lay-brother would seek accommodation there for themselves and their provisions, and he left it to the others to arrange for themselves on board the 'San Diogo.' And so the matter was settled. But for those, who were going to India, it was a heavy sacrifice not to voyage on the same ship with Father de Britto. "We should have been glad," says Father Schiedenhofen, "to have always had the experienced and virtuous man with us as our Superior, as our instructor and as an example."

On the 24th of March the missionaries went to the farewell audience at the royal castle and from there to the ships in the harbour. On the following day they were to put out to sea. But on the evening before, there arose a tempestuous south wind and most of the vessels in the harbour were torn from their anchorage. There was no thinking about an immediate departure. The storm lasted for fourteen days. On one or the other occasion, the missionaries were able to go ashore, and once for several days. Finally, on the 8th of April, shortly after midday, a light and favourable north wind set in. All sails were spread and the ships got ready to put to sea gaily. But Father de Britto was not on board when he heard the boom of a gun to announce the ships would sail before long. With Father Emanuel Faria he had gone ashore to the college of Saint Antony[1]. While hurrying back with his companion, he was met by a near relative, the Count de Marialva, who pressed him to take leave of the king once more. Father de Britto pleaded that he had already fulfilled that duty and that now there was not enough of time left as the ships were ready to weigh anchor. "There is still

(1) Fernão, Historia do nascimento, iii, ch. 6.

time enough," said the Count, "you could remain with the king for a few moments; it would afford him great pleasure and, if the ships should leave under sail before you should reach the harbour, I would place at your disposal a small sailing-boat, on which you could easily overtake them." Father de Britto yielded to the request. He was very kindly received by the king and drawn into conversation; he had also to take leave of the queen and to give a last blessing to the little Infanto. Then suddenly the second booming of the gun made known the startling fact that the ships had weighed anchor. From a window in the castle, Father Faria saw how rapidly they were sailing out of the harbour. Full of alarm he cried out: "Father de Britto it is too late! We cannot voyage with them!" Without further ceremony both left the royal presence and hurried towards the harbour, where they believed they would find a boat ready. On their way they met the Count de Marialva, who declared the sailing-boat he had engaged had gone out to the ships as all the other boats had done; his servant had, however, been sent to look for one. Perhaps he did not know the king had ordered all small sailing craft to keep themselves at a distance from the shore. As was his wont in difficult circumstances, Father de Britto sought refuge in Saint Francis Xavier and vowed he would say a definite number of Masses in his honour if he would afford help. Then suddenly a caravella, a little sailing-boat, hove into sight near the shore. Eagerly they boarded it at the Boa-Vista and Father de Britto promised Antonio Martins, the boatman, a rich reward if he would catch up with the ships now fast speeding down the Tagus. With full sail they set out but the task seemed hopeless. While the caravella raced down stream, the Marquis de Allegrete, the king's Comptroller, who was on his way back after seeing the ships depart, noticed the unusual speed of the little boat and correctly surmising the reason for its effort, hailed it, and coming alongside lent his own swift sailing-vessel to the Fathers and ordered it to take them under full canvas to the ships. The attempt veered on the impossible. Both the ships had already passed the tower of St. Giao, some fifteen miles beyond Lisbon. But the vessel's full blown sails were caught sight of by the Admiral of the 'Maria Conceicao', and knowing that his great friend Father de Britto had been left behind, he swung his ship across the bar. Before long the sailing-vessel overhauled the ship, and the Fathers having clambered aboard were welcomed with joy by all. Thus the threatening disaster was averted.

At first the ships met with favourable winds and made good head-way till the month of May. From then onwards they had

to battle much against adverse winds or found their progress arrested by perfect calms. Scarcely once did a breeze blow favourably and unbroken for three days together. To all, and especially to the crew, it therefore appeared marvellous that they entered the harbour of Goa before the close of the year. In the beginning of July the line of the Equator was reached. On the ships that left Lisbon late it was usual at this stage of the voyage for sickness to prevail. On this occasion a contagious fever broke out and raged for fourteen days. Day and night Father de Britto was at work helping the sick. The Acts of Beatification record that he aided a German seaman in death. The latter was a Protestant, who was deeply impressed when he saw the self-sacrificing charity of Father de Britto, and requested him to help him also; before long he expressed the wish to enter the Church, and after due instruction was received by Father de Britto, who administered the last sacraments to him.

On the 30th of July, the day before the feast of St. Ignatius, the Cape of Good Hope was rounded; the weather was most favourable; it showed no sign of change; no danger threatened. This is attributed by Father Schiedenhofen to the particular intercession of Saint Ignatius. His feast was celebrated most solemnly; a novena had been made before, and on the day itself there was High Mass and a panegyric in honour of the saint. On the 3rd of September the ships anchored off Mozambique. At this port, which belonged to the Portuguese, a landing was made, chiefly to take in fresh water. The missionaries spent eight days in the Jesuit college there and were not only welcomed in the most cordial manner but also provided with provisions for the rest of the voyage. On the 11th of May, they again boarded the ships but, not meeting with a favourable wind, they could only leave on the 13th of September. Before their departure, Father de Britto, in additon to many an other suffering, had to bear with a painful sacrifice. During the voyage a young man had asked to be admitted into the Society of Jesus, and Father de Britto wanted him to join the Novices on board the 'San Diogo' and that, in his stead, Father Schiedenhofen, whom he esteemed highly, should come over to the 'Maria Conceicao' and be of assistance to him. But Father Ciceri, the Superior of the community on board the 'San Diogo,' could not do without Father Schiedenhofen, as the latter had to look after the Novices and Scholastics on board and had necessarily to help in the catechetical instruction of two hundred negroes, who had embarked at Mozambique. Father de Britto had seen both his Jesuit companions die of the contagion that broke out while the ships were near the Equator; he had been the only priest on board his ship since then and had to continue so; for, the Jesuit, who was now lent to him, was not a priest.

On the last part of the voyage the worst was encountered. Due to bad water contagious disease again ravaged both the ships. On the 'San Diogo' more than fifty fell ill; while on the 'Maria Conceicao' no less than forty of the crew and passengers succumbed. Finally, on the 2nd of November, the coast off Goa was sighted. "It was good fortune that the end was near," says Father Schiedenhofen, "for our supply of provisions was running out." Towards midday the ships cast anchor in the harbour and, on the following day, the missionaries, as was customary, were met by their Religious Brethren there and accompanied to the city of Goa.

Writing from Goa to Fernão and referring to his experience on this voyage, Father de Britto remarks: "During the voyage I had to go through serious illness; by the goodness of God I regained my health. With my companions, Father Emanuel Faria and Brother Figueira, two pious zealous men, it fared worse; both fell victims of the contagion. Upon my shoulders the whole burden of work and of anxiety fell; for, I was the only priest who could be of help. In view of what I had to suffer on that ship: sickness, hunger, thirst, cold, storms and worries of every description: let us hope God will pardon me some punishment for sin!"

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The closing years, 1691-1693.

The final stage in the life of Father de Britto now sets in. As in 1674 so also now on landing in Goa, his first resort was to the tomb of his favourite saint and model, Francis Xavier. Then he paid a visit to the Provincial of the Province of Goa, who resided in the Professed house close to the church of Bom Jesu. The Provincial was probably Father Emanuel Rodriguez, who for many years had been the Superior of Father de Britto and had sent him as Procurator to Europe. Father de Britto also paid his respects to the Viceroy, Miguel de Almeida, a friend of his when a page at the royal Court. Shortly before, in June 1690, Don Miguel had assumed his office of government. To him Father de Britto conveyed the last greetings of his brother, Father Francis de Almeida, at whose death in Lisbon in March 1690, he had been present. In the spreading of Christianity and in the deepening of Catholic life among the newly converted, the Viceroy took the most lively interest. He requested the friend of his boyhood to strengthen his physical powers before returning to his Mission and to remain for that purpose some time longer in Goa. Father de Britto replied he could not stay longer than was necessary; the king had wished to retain him in the royal palace but the desire to be once again among his beloved converts had impelled him to return; and now, when about to enter his Mission, how could he longer allow his Brethren to bear the whole burden of work and also defer the expectation of his catechists any further? Nevertheless, Father de Britto had to protract his stay in Goa more than he had anticipated and he had also to fulfil the unexpected and sad duty of accompanying to the grave the Viceroy, who died in Goa on the 9th of January 1691.

During the first days after their arrival, the new missionaries were wont to rest in order to recover from the hardships of the long voyage and from any lingering effects of illness. They accordingly paid a visit to the neighbouring parishes of Salsette. Very likely Father de Britto accompanied them. Father Schiedenhofen finds himself at a loss how adequately to praise the hospitality and affection, with which they were received by the Fathers in all the parishes of Salsette, of which there were then twenty-four. Of their great zeal for souls he speaks highly and is astonished at the strength of faith in the converts. On their return to Goa, they celebrated the feast of Saint Francis Xavier with their Religious Brethren and with the whole city. After this, the exercises of the

third year of Probation or the so-called Tertianship commenced for Father Schiedenhofen and some other Fathers. Thoroughly restored to health and freshened, Father de Britto was probably placed at the disposal of the Fathers in Goa to assist them in their work for the welfare of souls. In accordance with instructions from the Provincial of Malabar he had to wait in Goa till Father Schiedenhofen and the other Fathers, who were destined for the Mission of Madura, had completed the most important exercises of the Tertianship. He was then to lead them to the Mission.

On Candlemas day, a short time after the royal ships had set sail on their return to Portugal, Father Schiedenhofen with five Italian Fathers was called by the Provincial in Goa from the Tertianship to the house of the Professed in the city, and spent eight days there in spiritual retirement. On the 11th or 12th of February, Father de Britto and Father Schiedenhofen embarked on a royal vessel to bring them to the Malabar Province in the south. Before leaving, Father de Britto was accorded a special favour. In his presence and before three others the tomb of Saint Francis Xavier was opened. In his letter to Fernão he makes this remark: "Father Augustin Lugado will bring a biretta to thee that with my own hand I placed on the body of Saint Francis Xavier; for, in the presence of Father Provincial and of the Rector of the Professed house and of the sacristan, the shrine was opened for my sake. I pray thee leave this relic in mother's chapel, so long as she lives. Do not count upon seeing me again in Portugal. On the first opportunity that I have, I shall, God willing, depart for my Mission."

Their voyage along the coast lasted about fourteen days. On the 23rd of February, they drew near to Cochin but could not land because the Dutch, in whose possession the town was, had issued a decree by which no Religious except the Carmelites could appear in Cochin. In consequence they avoided the town and by sailing up an estuary reached the river, on which farther up Ambalakata, their destination, lay. As the wind was favourable, they landed about noon on the following day and were welcomed by their Brethren in the college there. Some days of rest were enjoyed and after Ash-Wednesday, on Friday the 1st of March, they set out for Topo. The journey was very difficult and took several weeks to accomplish; a part of it was done on foot, a part on horseback; for the final stretch a little boat was placed at their disposal. In the middle of Lent our travellers arrived at Topo and not at Talai, as some biographers believe. Very warmly did Father Freire, who in the meantime had been appointed Provincial, welcome both Father Schiedenhofen and Father de Britto, who had been his co-worker and

friend for many years. As a missionary Father Freire had laboured for thirty years in Madura and thirteen of these with Father de Britto. "He was a man of childlike, pious disposition," says Father Franco, "and was revered by his Brethren and by his converts, who after his death could hardly withdraw themselves from his grave."[1] Shortly before the arrival of Father de Britto, he had received his nomination to the Archbishopric of Cranganore. This dignity had at first been offered Father de Britto by the king but had been declined. Towards Father Schiedenhofen Father Freire was most kind: as he had done seventeen years earlier to Father de Britto, so now he declared himself ready to instruct Father Schiedenhofen in Tamil and taught him for the next six weeks.

Father de Britto had to give him as Provincial an exact account of the discharge of his duty as Procurator. After that was over, he was at-length free to leave for his cherished Mission. What he would have preferred most of all would have been to have gone straight to Marava, where he certainly hoped to labour much and to suffer martyrdom. More than ever did martyrdom, as the glorious ending to his apostolic work, stand before the eyes of his soul. Quite plainly and frequently, he declared in the presence of his Brethren that he believed the happiness of martyrdom awaited him in Marava. But other trials were to come before that. Very ill news reached Topo from Madura. The Raja of Madura had died without an heir, and the whole State, so it was reported, was in upheaval, in confusion, in civil strife! Father Freire enjoined upon Father de Britto to go there and to ascertain how matters were and to send him accurate information. At the same time he was to report whether in the disordered condition of affairs it would be advisable to send Father Schiedenhofen there with two young missionaries. On the 18th of April, the Wednesday after Easter, the obedient missionary set out on this journey, and on the 15th of May messengers arrived in Topo, who brought favourable news and also said Father Schiedenhofen could leave for the residence of Avur, where he should continue his study of Tamil.

Believing himself free again to resume his work in Marava, Father de Britto prepared to go there. To his old friend, Father John da Costa, who on account of frail health had been obliged to exchange the hard work of a missionary for lighter at Talai on the Fishery Coast, Father de Britto wrote: "I have a mind to start for Marava on Sunday the 2nd of May. The day seems a propitious one; it is the feast of John, the martyred Pope. I hope he will accompany me.

(1) Franco, Annus gloriosus etc. p. 499.

Recommend this affair most earnestly to God, so that it prove to be to His honour and to the salvation of souls." Having reached Marava he at once set to work with indefatigable zeal and on the 20th of June again wrote to the same friend: "I am now in Verugapatti; I merely announce my arrival to you. I have been here fourteen days and have already heard about a thousand confessions and have baptised four hundred." He hoped for further success. But his Superiors called him to other work: they appointed him Visitor of the Madura Mission.[1] As Visitor, Father de Britto had to travel to the different residences of the Mission, acquaint himself with their condition, encourage the missionaries and from the store of his own experience help them with advice. It would seem he began the tour of his visit at Kamanayakkampatti, in the south of the Mission. When Superior of the Mission he had erected a chapel there in 1685. At the residence he now met Father Borghese, an old friend, who from 1685 had laboured tirelessly in that district for the conversion of the heathen. This mission station had developed most successfully due to the zeal of Father Borghese and to the protection received from the Administrator of the district. Proof of this protection can be gathered from a stone bearing the following inscription: "Just as twenty years ago my father interceded on behalf of this church and of the community of followers of the Roman Sanniyasi, so will I now protect this church and this priest. As testimony of that I erect this stone here. Should any one do harm to this church or oppose this priest, I will consider him as a traitor; and he will make himself guilty indeed of a crime as great as the killing of a black cow or of a Brahmin on the banks of the Ganges. This is the promulgation that I have made on the 19th of the month of Sattarei."[2]*

From Kamayanakkampatti the way to the north lies through Madura and onwards to Tanjore and Gingi. In the beginning of September, the Visitor was expected back in Avur, so as to be able towards the end of September or in the beginning of October to journey to his old field of labour in Marava. Either from Marava

(1) We must place this appointment and the departure it occasioned in June and not, as Father Boero and Father Prat do, at a time previous to the 28th of May. In a letter written on the 1st of September Father Schiedenhofen says that in the middle of June he was in Avur and was staying there by order of Father de Britto, who in the meantime was appointed Visitor. Further on in the letter he says Father de Britto had informed him that he would place him in charge of a residence no sooner he should return from the visit of the Mission, and that his return was daily expected. We must therefore place the travelling caused by the visit in the last days of June and throughout the months of July and of August up to a date within September.

(2) P. Suau, L'Inde Tamoule, Paris, p. 160; *30th April, 1698.

or before going there, he was obliged to go to Pondicherry. Father Schiedenhofen, of whom on account of his talents and virtue Father de Britto entertained high hopes, was ill and had to seek recovery in Pondicherry, where the climate was more suitable. Father de Britto accompanied him but the patient did not recover. Not long after Father de Britto had left him to return to Marava, he died in the small residence, which his French Brethren had recently built. In death Father Schiedenhofen held in his hand a small cross and a picture of the Mother of God, both gifts from Father de Britto. In Pondicherry the latter met his friend, Francois Martin, the Governor of the French Colony. From Goa and immediately upon his arrival from Europe in 1690, Father de Britto had written to him. This we find mentioned in the notes of the Governor's memoirs already referred to; in them he speaks of this, the last visit of the Father, and says: "After his arrival he came from Goa to the territory of Madura. He then honoured us by visiting Pondicherry, where we persuaded him to stay for a few days but for a much shorter time than we should have liked. His heart was still urging him on to his 'beloved Maravas', for such was the term he ordinarily used when speaking of them."[1]

Having returned to Marava from Pondicherry, Father de Britto was never to leave that realm again. His final labours in Marava lasted about fifteen months. It was a period of toilsome self-sacrifice. He never knew rest. His zeal had kindled into a devouring flame. At first he went to Kurudankudi, a village of the Kallars, on the border between Marava and Madura. There he had some security against persecution as the village lay in the centre of a far-stretching forest and the Kallars had always proved his protectors. Thither from all directions came fervent Christians and heathens eagerly desirous of salvation. Religious instruction, the administering of the sacraments of baptism, of penance and of the Altar took up all his time. But he did not stay long in Kurudankudi. To Father da Costa he writes on the 28th of March 1692: "On account of war I have been travelling continually for three months. I am thinking now of going into that district, which formerly belonged to Marava but was ceded by the Raja to Tanjore. I shall be of help to the Christians and heathens there." In the same letter he mentions that, on the second Sunday in Lent just as he was setting out to administer the holy sacraments to a dying person, he was told a body of police was on its way to arrest him. "When the policemen came," he continues, "I was already gone

(1) 'Examiner', 1909, p. 253.

half an hour. They laid hold of a Christian and beat him half dead; but he remained steadfast." Writing again on the 11th of July he informs Father da Costa that in June, on the feast of St. John, he was once more in danger of being arrested.

From month to month the thronging of people to the spot, where the missionary dwelt, grew greater. In three places in the forest he built small chapels and settled zealous catechists there to take in hand the preparation of the catechumens, to further instruct the Christians and to prepare all for the reception of the sacraments; while he himself went from chapel to chapel to fulfil the duties of his ministry. Not only did crowds of Panchamas seek admission into the Church but masses of people belonging to the respectable castes also yearned for baptism. The more the number of Christians grew, the more did the embitterment of the idolatrous priests deepen, and the fury of the persecution, they stirred up, heighten. "Every day," says Father Lainez, "the apostle was in danger of losing his life. Without running great risk he could not stay in any place for two unbroken days."[1] In September 1692, Father de Britto writes to Fernão: "Many thousands have been converted and among them also friends and relatives of the Raja. Our foes do not cease to persecute us; but the Raja and his ministers lend no ear to their complaints. The Raja merely says if I should preach in his territory, he would have me beheaded. I am now seeking an audience with him to find out under what decree I stand." But the Raja was not to be trusted. Some months previous he had declared, as Father de Britto remarks to Father da Costa, he hoped to seize Father de Britto and to strike off his head, thereby to put an end to the preaching of the foreign religion within his realm.[2]

In the midst of these hardships and perils of apostolic life, the sweetness of heavenly solace did not fail the man of God. In almost every letter, that he wrote during those months, he expresses how happy and at peace he felt himself. To Father da Costa he says he has the good news to communicate he shall never return to Portugal. Then he adds: "My heart yearns upwards to Heaven and not towards the Earth. Far dearer to me are the forests of Marava than the palace of the king in Lisbon." On another occasion writing to the same he declares: "The conversions increase; from many places requests are sent for a catechist. What are really all the honours of Europe in comparison with the glorious vocation God has given me!" He extols this vocation in a letter to his cousin

(1) Lettres édifiantes, X 5.

(2) Fernão de Britto, Historia do nascimento, etc. p. 246.

and fellow-Jesuit, Father Luiz Pereira, and remarks: "I do not believe that in any other part of the world one can work more for the glory of God or endure more for His love." Most earnestly does he urge his cousin to come and join him in the Mission. "Thou wilt realise that he, who would work for the glory of the Saviour and further his own salvation, will find no country surpass Madura!"[1]

The apostle worked incessantly but he saw with pain how the many, who wanted him, were hindered from coming to him because to do so was linked to such great peril. His foes were never idle. So he sought a place, where those in search of salvation could betake themselves to him with less danger. Near the frontier of Madura there lay a small chieftaincy, whose ruler was feudatory to the Raja of Madura, but who in consequence of the confusion caused by war had made himself independent. This chieftain was well disposed towards Father de Britto and, though given to idolatry, placed no hindrance in the way of preaching the Gospel. In Muni, as the chieftaincy was called, Father built a chapel. Thither from all sides the catechists brought Christians and catechumens, whom they had instructed. Thousands received holy baptism. In a letter to Father da Costa on the day before his death, Father de Britto wrote: "This year I have given holy baptism to four thousand persons." He did not restrict his activity to Muni and the neighbouring environs but frequently made excursions to the chapels, he had built in the forests, and rendered assistance to those, who lived too far from Muni to be able to come there. During the last fifteen months of his life he received at least eight thousand heathens into the Church. Father Lainez, his Superior, who must have known the fact, expressly states this number. A prince of the royal family of Marava, called Thadayathevar, had heard much about Father de Britto's unselfish work. His ancestors had possessed the royal throne but had been despoiled of their right by the family of Rangunathathevar, who was then ruling. Thadayathevar now lived in Sirupallei. In the teaching of the foreign Sanniyasi he showed interest and asked some catechists to instruct him more in detail. He fell seriously ill and was given up by his medical attendants. Thereupon he decided on appealing to the help of the God of the Christians; he sent messengers to Father de Britto, whose dwelling he came to know, and requested him to come himself or to send a catechist, who could teach him the truth of the Gospel.

(1) Fernão de Britto, Historia do nascimento, etc, p. 246.

Father de Britto appointed a catechist to go to him, who briefly placed the chief doctrines of the Faith before him and prayed the beginning of St. John's gospel over him. At that very instant the patient was completely cured. This evident miracle increased the yearning of the prince personally to come to know the apostle of so holy and marvellous a religion. Though Father de Britto no longer doubted about the singlemindedness of the prince's intentions, he, nevertheless, first called together the catechists and the most highly esteemed of his converts and plainly told them what consequences would probably result for them from the conversion of the prince; for instance, fresh severe persecutions on the part not only of the ordinary heathen but especially of the idolatrous priests. All were, however, quite unanimous in saying that, even though the baptism of Thadayathevar should occasion fresh storms of persecution, his baptism seemed to them to belong to the designs of divine Providence. Father de Britto now went to the prince and stayed with him for several days to complete the instruction, which the catechists had begun. At Sirupallei he celebrated the feast of the Epiphany. On that day he baptised two hundred catechumens, who for some time previous had been prepared for this sacrament. Upon Thadayathevar the sublime ceremony made a deep impression and he, too, asked for baptism. "Thou dost not yet know," the Father said to him, "all that Christianity demands of its adherents. Christians must lead a pure and holy life." Then he earnestly and definitely explained to the prince the high demands that were placed upon a Christian and, in particular, what the Christian Faith required in regard to marriage. It was necessary to lay stress upon this point as Thadayathevar had five wives at home, all of whom were from the leading families in the country. Thadayathevar declared himself ready for any sacrifice. "I will," he said, "at once remove this hindrance in the way; I hope then thou wilt be pleased with me." After saying this he went into his palace, called for his wives, told them of the miraculous healing, which the true God through the power of the Gospel had wrought in him, and said he had decided to devote the rest of his life to the same great, mighty and good God: but God forbade him to have more than one wife. "I will obey Him," he continued, "and I will have with me only one wife, the one I took first in marriage. For the welfare of the others I will so care that nothing need be feared." Extremely upset, his wives endeavoured with entreaty and tears to bring the prince to alter his decision; but he remained firm and received baptism at the hands of Father de Britto on the 6th of January, 1693 (1).

(1) Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 232.

The latter now hastened to return to Muni. He realised what stood before him now. Once again he called together the most prominent of his Christians and informed them that in two or three days he would be arrested by the soldiers of the Raja of Marava. With enthusiasm all declared they would stay with him to share his lot in all things. But this he would not permit. "No, my children," he said to them, "what God demands of me, He will not expect of you. Exercise the foresight, which Christian prudence asks for. Let me go alone into the conflict and to death. You flee to a safe place and beseech God for me that in the final struggle He strengthen me!" They obeyed. Only a few were allowed to remain with him. The brave Kanagappan, a Christian most devoted to him, did not want to leave. Of perfect physique and possessed of great will-power, he would have defended the Father against the soldiers by repelling violence with violence. Father de Britto despatched him to a distant village and ordered him not to return to Muni till he sent for him.

The storm began to brew. Kadalayi, the youngest of Thadayathevar's wives, was a niece of Rangunathathevar, the Raja of Marava. She went to the Court of her royal uncle and bitterly complained about the disgrace that Thadayathevar had brought upon her; she wept and wailed and demanded justice of the Raja and the use of his power against the foreign sorcerer, who through his witchcraft had won Thadayathevar over. To the idolatrous priests she also appealed. They for long had but waited for such an opportunity to destroy this Sanniyasi, whom they detested.

At the head of the idolatrous priests stood Pompavanan, a Brahmin, who burned with hatred against Father de Britto. Now at last he could avenge himself upon the foreigner! How had this foreigner not estranged followers from him and how had he not lessened many a lucrative source of income? He called together the leading Brahmins and consulted with them about the ways and means of doing away with the hated foreign Sanniyasi and of exterminating the ever-growing Christian community. Then in a body they went to the Raja. Pompavanan was the spokesman; with bitterness he complained that the worship of the gods was neglected; that most of the temples and places of sacrifice were deserted and that the images of the gods had been overthrown; all ran after this European Sanniyasi and even joined his pernicious sect. Brahmins could no longer look on at all that but would leave the realm; with their own eyes they did not wish to see the destruction that the infuriated gods would bring down upon the land and its ruler, who allowed all these things to happen unpunished!

Indignant and enraged the Raja summoned Thadayathevar to his Court and asked him whether all that he had heard about him and this foreign Sanniyasi was based on truth. "Thou hast not been told too much," replied Thadayathevar, "the Sanniyasi has returned to Marava, has built four chapels within the realm and has converted a multitude of heathens to the Law of Christ; I also have become a Christian!" Rangunathathevar did not dare lay hands on his relative, who stood high in the esteem of the people. But he gave the command that the houses of the Christians should be plundered, that a heavy fine should be levied upon all those, who should prove firm in their faith, and that all the chapels should be burned down. His command was carried out with such violence that a very large number of Christian families was utterly ruined; but these preferred to lose their possessions rather than deny their belief.

Father de Britto, so the Raja further ordered, should be seized and brought before him. Against the Father he wanted to act with keenest cruelty so as to terrorise the Christians and lead them to apostatise. Several parties of soldiers set forth to carry out the command. Father de Britto was at Muni. On the 8th of January he administered the holy sacraments to many Christians; then, as though he had foreseen all that would happen, he advised them to seek safety and to escape from a blood-thirsty persecution. A few hours later, towards midday, he was informed that a troop of soldiers was drawing near to make him prisoner. With a smile on his face and without the slightest sign of disquiet he went towards them. Hardly had the soldiers caught sight of him than they threw themselves upon him, hurled him to the ground and cruelly ill-treated him with blows. A Christian Brahmin, named John, who had hastened thither, met with the like mishandling. More than all the blows did the blasphemies, that the brutal soldiers poured forth against God, wound the heart of the confessor of the Faith. Two boys in the care of Father de Britto, of whom the elder was not fourteen years old, did not want to separate themselves from him. Threats and blows could not repel them. They were also put into chains and, with Father de Britto and John, were tied to horses, with which they had to keep pace. Father de Britto, whose physical powers were worn out by the hard life of the Mission, was unable to hold out for long. He fell to the ground almost at every step. His gang of captors forced him to raise himself up and to run on again, although they saw his feet were severely cut and bled profusely. So had his divine Master been handled on the way to Calvary; nor did he want to have it better. A large village, called Hanumanthakudi, was reached, where reviling and mockery

were heaped upon the prisoners. Many people had hurried thither. The soldiers placed the prisoners on a temple car, on which on feast-days idols were led in procession through the streets, and left them there all day long to the scorn and abuse of the heathen populace.

In the night that followed the day of suffering, Father de Britto, while he prayed, heard footsteps without and on looking outside caught sight of Kanagappan, his faithful catechist, armed with a heavy stick, who, on coming to know of the seizure of his master, had hastened thither to save his life cost what it may. But Father de Britto wanted to hear nothing about measures for his escape. He severely reproached Kanagappan for having left his post before being called back, and firmly gave him to understand that he would not take to flight like a thief in the night but would let Providence hold sway. On the next day the prisoners had to set forth on the way to Ramnad, the capital of the realm. Father de Britto would probably have succumbed on the route if a Christian general had not sent a horse to be placed at his disposal. On the 11th of January the little cavalcade rode into the capital. Close to the prisoners a catechist, Muthu Pillay, with Arulnathan and Mariathasan, was also confined; they had been arrested at Kandaramanikom, where a small community had been founded by Father de Britto. After the soldiers had seized him, they burned the chapel down and destroyed the homes of the Christians.

When the prisoners reached the capital, the Raja was not there: he had left orders that until his arrival they should be cast into prison and guarded strictly. In the meantime Thadayathevar, who through no fault of his had been the occasion of all this persecution, had gone to the Court actively to engage himself in the rescue of his father, as he called Father de Britto, Owing to his efforts the guard to some extent permitted the prisoners a little relief. But for all that the imprisonment was hard enough. For many days these confessors of the Faith received, as daily nourishment, some milk handed to them but once.

The priests of idolatry rested as little as Thadayathevar did. They loudly demanded the death of the detested herald of the Faith. After a fortnight the Raja returned. In large numbers the priests hurried to the palace of the Raja and indulged in calumnies and accusations of the most loathsome kind against the victim of their hate. He should, they demanded, be delivered up to the derision of the mob, thus to frighten all others from accepting the religion he taught. Thadayathevar, who was present, fearlessly approached the Raja and requested him to summon the most learned Brahmins together; these could then publicly discuss religion

with the foreign Sanniyasi. Such a discussion would be an easy and a sure means of learning where the truth lay.

Enraged at the boldness of such speech the Raja addressed the prince: "How canst thou," he cried out, "take the part of this preacher of a foreign religion! Thou must at-once pay due honour to the gods that are set up here!" Thadayathevar calmly rejoined: "In a miraculous manner and through the power of the Gospel I have been healed of mortal illness. How could I choose to deny the Gospel and again pray to the gods? I should then truly perish both in body and in soul!" The fury of the Raja heightened greatly but he dared not go to any extreme; for, he had good reason to fear the populace would range itself on the side of Thadayathevar and rise in revolt. So in his rage he sent for a young man, Puravuthevar, who a short while before had also been baptised and through baptism had recovered his health. The Raja commanded him to offer sacrifice to the gods. Puravuthevar refused at first but then, out of fear of the Raja's wrath, gave up all opposition and obeyed. In an instant his previous illness again befell him and with such severity, indeed, that he seemed near death. This brought him to his senses: he began to pray and asked for a crucifix; he threw himself upon his knees and with tears of repentance implored God for grace and mercy. Both health of body and of soul were again restored to him.

While Puravuthevar was offering sacrifice to the gods, the Raja had turned for the second time to Thadayathevar and with threats commanded him to follow the example of Puravuthevar. He steadfastly refused and said he was ready to die rather than obey, and counselled the Raja not to give himself the trouble of trying to make him apostatise. In enthusiastic language Thadayathevar went on to speak about the beauty of the Christian religion. But interrupting him the Raja said: "Thou shalt see what the God, to whom thou prayest, may do and how great is the power of the religion that thy wretched friend had taught thee. In three days this friend shall die; I will lay no hands on him; our gods will destroy him." Then he ordered the patirgali in honour of the goddess, Bhadra Kali, should be offered immediately. This was a spell, to which all idolators attached great potency. Any one, against whom it was offered, would surely die, so they said. It was also called satthuruvin sangaram or the utter destruction of the foe. In connection with this spell diabolical incantations and rites went on for three days but did not effect the destruction of the foreign Sanniyasi. Even the heathens began to make fun over its failure. The Brahmins now fell back upon another kind of

their magic spells. This was the selpechiam, and they told the Raja it would infallibly bring about the death of the Sanniyasi. (1) Hope again revived within Rangunathathevar. But Father de Britto remained unharmed The priests of idolatry now asserted this Sanniyasi of the new religion was himself one of the greatest of sorcerers, who through his witchcraft had brought to nothing all the endeavours of the Brahmins. Rangunathathevar then summoned Father de Britto before him and showed him the breviary, which had been taken from him on his arrest. "Does this book not give thee," he enquired, "the craft, which charms thee against the spells of our priests ?" Father de Britto replied : "In this book are the praises of God and the prayers, which I daily say." "Well," said the tyrant, "I will see whether it protects thee against our bullets." He ordered the breviary to be tied to the neck of the Father and that he be led through the ranks of the soldiers, who were to fire at him. When these were already taking aim at him with their muskets, Thadayathevar in open revolt against such a tyrannical order threw himself among them and exclaimed he also wanted to be shot if his own dear Father should be killed. The soldiers shrank back and the Raja, who observed this, again grew afraid it might lead to a rebellion if harm should befall Thadayathevar. He withdrew the order and had Father de Britto led back to prison. But, before doing so, he pronounced the following judgment : "I condemn this foreigner to banishment, who has dared against my will and command to preach his doctrine in my realm. The other prisoners will remain in prison for the present ; later on, I will decide about their fate."

On the following day, the 29th of January, Father de Britto was handed over to a party of soldiers, who were to lead him to Oriyur, a large village that lay a two days' journeynorth of Ramnad. Father de Britto foresaw what awaited him there. Now that he was near the goal of his life-long yearning, heavenly joy shone from his countenance. He bade touching farewell to all his fellow-sufferers. The only thing, which caused him anguish, was that he had to leave them behind and alone. Singly and together, he once again exhorted them to remain true to their faith and magnanimously to sacrifice their lives for God. The heathens, who witnessed the scene, were moved to tears ; they were unable to understand how Father de Britto, upon whom death so near made no impression, could still bear such tender love for his fellow sufferers : they also wondered

(1) A small vessel filled with incense and other ingredients is heated. Dripping wet the officiating priest stands before the burning vessel, asks the devil to possess him and begins to prophesy harm to someone.

at the heroic courage of the cathechists, who had but one wish : to die with their master.

Now it was that Thadayathevar and some influential Christians, who were afraid that the Raja would have the Father secretly murdered on the way, wanted to accompany him to Oriyur. But Father de Britto objected to that and ordered them most emphatically to remain behind and there to strive that his fellow-sufferers should be freed. They were forced to obey and succeeded in obtaining the acquittal of all the imprisoned Christians. Like Thadayathevar, the three catechists, Kanagappan, Sooran and Siluvai Nayakkar (1), who six years previously had shared with Father de Britto the torture inflicted by Kumara Pillay, had hurried to Ramnad not only to be near him but also to try all they could to save the Father for the young Christian community of Marava. Together with Thadayathevar and the Christians at the Court, they had devised means of escape. But Father de Britto, who came to know of their plan, had a letter written to them, which he signed with his own hand ; he charged them to take no steps towards his freedom and not to deprive him of the happiness of dying for the Faith. They could not get to Father de Britto ; the soldiers watched so strictly that no Christian could draw near the prison. Nevertheless, letters from Fathers John da Costa and Lainez, the Superior of the Mission of Madura, found their way to him. It must have been a solace to the prisoner to realise how the Christians all around sympathised with his lot and that the persecution did not produce discouragement among them but rather strengthened and filled them with enthusiasm. Through the cathechist, Emanuel Pillay, who had brought the two letters, he sent the request to his Brethren to pray for his Christians and to offer up penance in order that God might bestow upon him the grace of perseverance and the crown of martyrdom.

(1) Siluvai Nayakkar was related to the renowned Tirumalai, the Nayak or Raja of Madura. The family still exists and is distinguished for its Catholicism. At least twelve of its members, eight of whom were Jesuits, have devoted their lives either as priests or as lay-brothers to the service of the Church. The Revd. John Mariathas, a lineal descendant of Siluvai Nayakkar's and stationed at Ideikatour in the Ramnad district, says that tradition in his family maintains that, after Father de Britto had returned to Marava in 1692, Siluvai Nayakkar had prepared several thousands for baptism, who were received into the Church by Father de Britto. About this time Siluvai Nayakkar became blind and lived at Avur, where Father de Britto visited him. His work as a catechist was carried on later by his son, Mariathasan. With Father de Britto the latter had been cast into prison at Ramnad. One of the crucifixes used by Father de Britto, and exhibited in 1924 at the Vatican Mission Exposition, is in the possession of the family and is very much venerated. In times of great distress the intercession of Father de Britto is publicly invoked through this crucifix.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The glorious ending, 1693.

On the evening of the 29th of January, Father de Britto surrounded by a guard left Ramnad. His severe imprisonment had quite exhausted his strength, which had already been weakened enough without that. He was offered a horse because it was feared he would die on the way; but he was soon forced to dismount; for, the rough soldiers begrudged him any relief; so he dragged himself along painfully. The region, through which the track led, is inhospitable even to-day. At that time a good road existed there as little as it does now. Father de Britto often fell to the ground; his feet were wounds; blood marked the traces of his steps; now and again he was offered some milk as nourishment; he was bound hand and foot; for whole stretches of the journey his body tied to ropes was dragged over the ground by his inhuman guard. Even heathens, who saw him, pitied him. No one believed he would reach Oriyur alive. On the way lies a village where, even now, the tradition lives that Father de Britto arrived utterly exhausted and in a pitiable condition. A heathen woman saw him and moved with compasion gave the soldiers some money to permit her to offer the Father a vessel filled with milk. He thanked her from the bottom of his heart and asked her the name of the village. She told him it was Pillur, the herb village. "Well then," he replied, "may Pillur in future always be Nellur, the rice village!" Since that time, tradition says the rice crop always succeeds well even when on account of prolonged drought the rice fields in the neighbourhood bear no yield.(1).

On the 31st of January, the party arrived at Oriyur, a large village and at that time a fortified place situated on the banks of the river Pambaru. At the present day there are still some traces of the walls of its fortress. Of the palace of the official representatives of the Raja a few portions, that enclosed the inner courts, are also left; each of these courts is about twenty-five feet broad and forty-five feet long. A brother of the Raja, Udayarthevar by name, was then governor there. In cruelty he perhaps outdid even his brother. A letter from the Raja conveyed to him the command to behead the foreign Sanniyasi. Udayarthevar immediately ordered Father de Britto to be brought before him and received

(1) About half a mile west of Pillur are two mandabams or country-houses that belonged to Udayarthevar. Father de Britto is said to have been locked up in one of them. Pillur is three miles south of Oriyur.

him not ungraciously. He was blind and lame and, as he had heard of the wonderful cures that God had wrought through the Gospel, he hoped to be freed from his infirmities by the renowned guru. After a long conversation on religious matters he sent Father de Britto back to prison. On the following day Udayarthevar despatched his wives to the prison, where they cast themselves down before the Father and entreated of him to make their lord well again. Without promising anything Father de Britto dismissed them. Udayarthevar again summoned Father de Britto before him and promised to let him go free and to reward him handsomely if he would heal him. "Even if I had the power to make thee hale, such promises, as thine are, would not induce me to do so; but God alone can heal thee," replied the Father, "His power is limitless." In a fury the tyrant cried out to the guard: "Back with him to prison; get every thing ready to execute him!" But his death was postponed for three days more; for, to Udayarthevar his first wife had come and had besought him not to lay violent hands upon an innocent person; her appeal had made an impression on the tyrant and had led him to delay.

On the 3rd of February, Father de Britto succeeded in sending a letter to Father Lainez, the Superior of the Mission, and a second to Father da Costa. Ink and quill were not at hand; a blade of straw served as a quill and, as ink, some charcoal stirred up in water. To Father Lainez he wrote the following lines: "My dear Father! Through Ranagappan, my catechist, thou has learned of what has happened in my prison up to my departure for Ramnadburam. On the 28th of January I was obliged to appear before the tribunal. I was told I was condemned to be shot to death. I was brought to the spot, where I was to die, and all was prepared, when the Raja fearing an uprising gave the order to separate me from my dear children, the other confessors of Jesus Christ, in order to give me over into the hands of his brother Udayarthevar. He charged him to execute me without delay. On the last day of January I arrived at Udayarthevar's palace. The journey was full of hardship. Udayarthevar sent for me on the same day. I had a long conversation with him about religious matters. Then I was brought back to prison, where I find myself still and in constant expectation of death, which I shall endure for God. The hope of obtaining this happiness led me twice to India. True it is, to seek after and secure such happiness has cost me much; but the reward, which I hope for from God, is worth all these and still greater pains. The crime, of which I am accused, is none other than that I preach the true religion of God and that, therefore, the idols are no longer

worshipped. What an honour to suffer death for such a crime! It fills me with joy and consolation in the Lord. Soldiers guard me strictly; hence I can write no more. God be with you, Father! I beg your blessing and recommmend myself to your holy Masses. From the prison at Oriyur, 3rd February, 1699."

On the same day he also wrote his last letter to Father da Costa. It ran as follows: "Reverend Father da Costa! the peace of Christ! Well do I know how much I am indebted to you in gratefulness! God will repay you all. Emanuel* will have informed you about my arrest and the subsequent happenings. I have been sent finally to Oriyur to be beheaded here. On the journey I had to bear with much. On arriving here I was led before the tribunal of the prince. I professed my faith in a long examination. Thrown into prison I now await the happy day! Most pressingly do I beg your blessing as well as that of Father Provincial and of the other Fathers. Remember me at holy Mass. I am full of joy in the Lord; it holds my strength up. Soldiers are ever around me; therefore I write no more. Farewell, my good friend! This letter is intended for all my Brethren. This year I have baptised four thousand heathens."

Udayarthevar was still undecided. On the one hand he had the order of the Raja, and on the other the entreaty of his wife and his wish to be healed by the foreign Sanniyasi. The latter reasons urged him to use clemency. But at-length his chief minister, a hard, cruel man thirsting for revenge and exercising great influence over the prince, prevailed over him to decide upon the beheading. On the 4th of February, Udayarthevar gave Father de Britto over into the hands of five executioners. It was Ash-Wednesday.

As Father de Britto had foreseen what was to happen, he had made himself ready throughout the whole night of the 3rd of February. He even put on the best garment he had. Towards midday on the fourth, the executioners came to fetch him. Smilingly Father de Britto said to them: "I am ready!", and then went at so quick a pace to the place of execution that the guard could hardly follow.

Towards the north and close to the river Pambaru but somewhat distant from the fortress, a low sandy mound rises. This was to be the place of his sacrifice. On arriving at the spot he requested his executioners to accord him a little time that he might

*The catechist Emanuel Pillay

recollect himself in prayer. Many, both Christians as well as heathens, had hastened there to witness the scene of blood-shed. We are informed by Monsieur Martin that just before his death Father de Britto gave a message to one of his catechists for Pondicherry. "The Reverend Father walked joyously to the scene of his triumph" says Monsieur Martin, "and on arriving there and only a few moments before his death, he directed one of the catechists, who had accompanied him, to travel to Pondicherry, and inform the Revd. Father Tachard and myself that his course was finished. As a separate message for me, I was assured that he would not forget me in the future life, where he hoped to be received by God into glory."(1) In the presence of all, Father de Britto then knelt down and prepared himself for the final struggle. His countenance was lit up with holy joy. At the sight of him even heathens were moved to tears. Intense silence reigned, broken now and then by words of indignation at the cruelty and injustice of this condemnation to death.

The executioners are ready; one of them takes up a broad scimitar in his hand but, when he looks at Father de Britto still absorbed in prayer, he shudders. Then from the palace there appears the son of the prince. "What makes thee dawdle?", he shouts," carry out what has been commanded thee!" In an instant Father de Britto arises, makes the sign of the cross, goes up to the executioners, embraces them and says: "Now, my brothers, do with me as it pleases you!" Half drunk the executioners rather than quietly remove his garments tear them rudely off. Around his neck he wears a small reliquary. When they see this, they shrink back frightened; for, they imagine therein is concealed the spell, which he made use of to bewitch those who became his followers. One of the executioners seizes a scimitar to cut the thread to which the reliquary is attached, and in doing so inflicts a deep gash on the neck of the Father. A stream of blood flows down to the ground as the reliquary drops. But the executioners still fear its spell; they fancy their scimitars will prove useless; they fetch a big hatchet, such as is used to fell sacrificial animals with, so that if the scimitar should fail, they would use the hatchet. They tie a cord to his beard and draw the cord round his body, so that his head, when severed from the trunk, should hang from his breast.

Then Father de Britto threw himself at once upon his knees, lifted his hands and eyes upwards to Heaven and in this position awaited the death-blow. But two of the Marava Christians, unable

(1) 'Examiner', 1909, p. 254.

to control themselves any longer, forced their way through the crowd and cast themselves down before Father de Britto and protested they wanted to die with him. They were shoved aside. Now one of the executioners hastily seized a scimitar and struck at the neck of Father de Britto ; his blow did not suffice to sever the head from the trunk; a second blow was dealt. Then the hands and feet were hacked off, and the head and trunk impaled upon a stake set up on the spot, where the martyr had last prayed silently. Their brutal work over, the executioners seized the two Christians, who had braved death, and brought them before the prince. Their ears and noses were cut off and they were ordered to leave. One of the two, however, returned to the place of execution, gathered the hands and feet of the martyr and, fastening them on the stake, remained for a long time on the spot in silent prayer. (1).

Such was the glorious ending of the great apostle, for which all through his life he had wished so yearningly. Its detailed description written by Father Lainez on the 10th of February, six days after it had occurred, was sent by him to the Fathers of the Mission. To his account he adds these appealing words : "We also have left Europe as he did ; perhaps we also may venture to hope to share in his happiness and to die as martyrs. May the infinite mercy of God and of our Saviour work within us the grace necessary thereunto ! The Christians of Marava are in a sorrowful plight. Pray to God and our Saviour that the blood of its first martyr may bring salvation to this country and that, due to his intercession, men may come here mighty, as the Blessed was, in word and deed to continue further what he has so gloriously begun! "

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(1) Mgr. Gaspar Alfonso, Bishop of Mylapore, mentions in the Process for the Beatification that Father de Britto had prophesied none would be put to death in the persecution in which he was martyred.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

A Character Sketch.

We have followed Father de Britto through the varying scenes of his life up to his blood-stained death on the mound at Oriyur. Let us now endeavour to bring out in a brief sketch the leading traits of his personality, so as to retain in mind a lasting impression of him.

In appearance Father de Britto was not tall. His complexion was pale ; his hair and thick beard were jet black in colour. On his face, which was somewhat long, noble traits revealed themselves that instinctively awakened reverence. About his mouth a light smile generally played ; his eyes were small but shone vivaciously ; his conversation was lively and stimulating and his tone of voice soft and pleasing. His bearing was distinguished yet natural and his whole manner winning and amiable. In his memoirs, Monsieur Francois Martin vividly describes the outward appearance of the martyr when in his mature manhood. "Father de Britto," he observes, "was below middle height, with black hair, and from his appearance about forty-five or forty-six years of age. His constitution appeared delicate and little fitted to bear the austerities and fatigues of this mission. Yet there were few missionaries who endured them as he did. His face was always wreathed in smiles and his temper cheerful ; he was a pleasant companion ; while his devoutness was unforced, insinuating and attractive." (1).

By nature Father de Britto was endowed with splendid qualities. In the catalogues, the reports of his Superiors to the General of the Order praise his fortunate talents, his good judgment, his prudence and experience. During the course of his studies his keen intellect shone brilliantly. Though frail health and other circumstances often made it necessary for him to interrupt his studies, he, nevertheless, brought them to so distinguished a conclusion that his Superiors seriously thought of entrusting to him the chair of philosophy in the college of Goa. The clearness of his understanding gave him the sureness and the facility, with which he succeeded in even the most difficult of work. As a missionary, as a Superior of the Mission, as the Procurator of the Malabar Province at the royal Court, as Visitor of the Mission of Madura, he found his way through under all circumstances and with equal correctness, calm-

(1) 'Examiner', 1909, p. 254

ness and decisiveness. Matched with his sharp intelligence there was bestowed upon him, as the precious heritage of the de Britto, such strength of will and chivalrous courage that shrank back from no hindrance. Within him there throbbed a warm, true heart. His childlike attachment to his mother was touching and so, too, was his love for his brothers and sisters. If in following the call of God, he was obliged to cause pain to his mother, he was no zealous in his care to console her and to lessen her sorrow. Deep and lasting was his friendship. And of friends he had many. His amiableness attracted them powerfully. King Pedro, Count de Marialva, Tavora and de Almeida the Viceroys of Goa, and other playmates of his youth clung to him and bore him in loving memory. Nor did he forget them. Amid all the labours of his unflagging zeal he managed to find time for short letters and deeds of friendliness. On the eve of his death his best friends, Fater John da Costa and Monsieur Francois Martin, the Governor of Pondicherry, were favoured with his last friendly greetings. "I have gained this advantage," says Francois Martin, "that I have had a most particular acquaintance with the most blessed Father and have been most tenderly loved by him. Of this he gave proof only a few moments before his death." (1).

But what is more than all else, John de Britto stands before us in the heroism of mature saintliness. Benedict XIV, before his elevation to the Papal See, had, in virtue of his office, read through the Acts of Beatification in detail, and he affirmed that the material lying before him sufficed to reckon John de Britto no less among the number of confessors than among the number of the Martyrs; for, just as his martyrdom was thoroughly proved, so, too, were his virtues clearly heroic.

The whole core and centre of all his virtues was his love for Jesus. Early in his life this love took possession of his heart; it led him to the religious state, to the Society of Jesus; it urged him to work only for his Saviour, for His kingdom and for His honour. Hence it was, he was so happy in his Mission of Madura; hence, too, the glowing enthusiasm that urged him to appeal to his cousin, Father Luiz Pereira, to come there also "because nowhere else can one further the honour of the Saviour more; nowhere else can one suffer more for Him and out of love for Him." Sacrifice and suffering are indeed the best proofs of love.

It is wonderful how deep the yearning to suffer for Jesus; how deep the longing for martyrdom had struck root in the heart of the

(1) 'Examiner,' 1909, p. 254.

martyr. Particularly after his first, excruciating, blood-stained testimony in 1686 does this desire for martyrdom grow stronger and stronger. Again and again Father de Britto spoke about it to trusted friends. With reference to it and before his second voyage out to India he declared to his Brethren: "The Mission of Madura is my Fatherland; it is the place of my re-birth for Heaven; there I shall be permitted to pour out my blood for my Redeemer."(1) When he again embarked from Lisbon in 1690, he said to his fellow-voyagers: "I consider myself fortunate to have escaped the dangers of worldly honours and to have secured again the hope of a martyr's crown."(2) On arriving in India he did not doubt that his longing for martyrdom would soon be stilled. Father de Bouchet, his companion in the Mission, frequently heard him say: "I preserve my head for the Raja of Marava and I have returned to India to surrender it to him."(3) A child of one of his catechists was brought to him to be blessed and, when the child stretched its hand out towards the Father's long beard, he checked the child with the words: "Do not touch my beard; I preserve it and my head for the Raja of Marava."(4) More than once he most urgently requested his catechists to pray for the grace of martyrdom for him.(5) When martyrdom came, he suffered its torments with such fullness of joy that his face was radiant with heavenly happiness as he received the death-blow.

Burning love for Jesus Christ compelled John de Britto to clad himself in the livery and with the insignia of his Lord, and it led him in humbleness to heroic perfection. Already in the Novitiate he learned to prize nobility and high birth little. To his fellow-novices he said: "I have realised my true nobility from the time that I have been ranked among the brothers and disciples of the Lord."(6). The more the love for Jesus Christ grew, the more blighted did esteem and worldly honour appear to his mind. As his task in life he chose missionary activity among the abandoned heathen and among them the most despised of all, the Panchamas, were his privileged favourites. The poverty and filth of their huts, their coarse and vile habits did not make him recoil. In Portugal, the honourable position of a royal Councillor and that of a tutor at the royal Court had beckoned to him; a bishopric had been offered him. But all

(1) Act. Beatif., Summar, n.
(2) Fernão de Britto, Historia etc, 168.
(3) Act Beatif, Summar, n. 7, para 174.
(4) Ibid, n. 6, para 47.
(5) Ibid, n. 7, para 122.
(6) Prat, Histoire du Bienheureux Jean de Britto, 33.

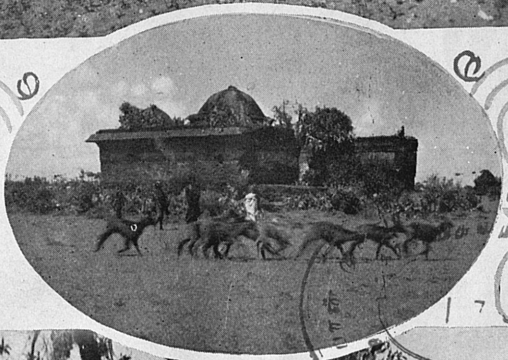
that can bring worldly honour with it, he rejects, so that forgotten by men he may labour for his Redeemer and for His interests. He disliked titles. In an address on a letter his brother, Fernão, had styled him Procurator General. Reprovingly Father de Britto requests: "My brother, write simply: 'to Father de Britto of the Society of Jesus': This means I am neither very honourable nor a lord; I am thy younger brother, and as such and as a religious I am thy servant; that is all. The title Procurator General, that thou givest me, belongs only to public documents, not to private letters."

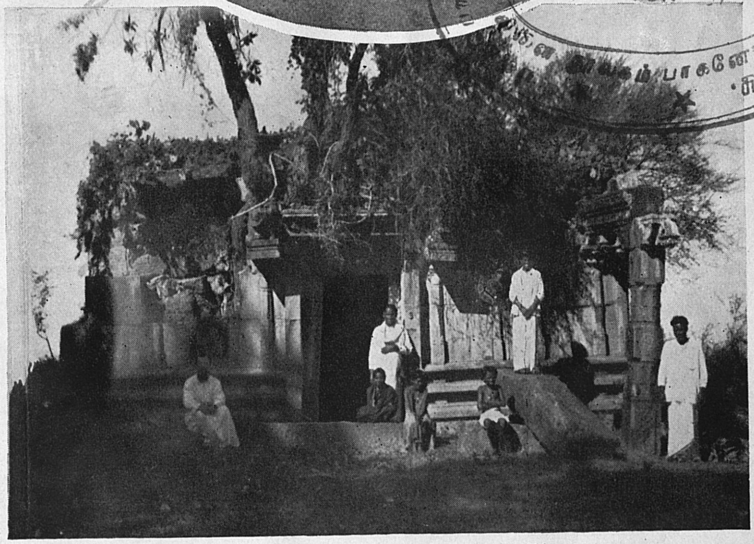
His love for Jesus Christ was the source of an ever-growing and tireless zeal for souls. With yearning he awaited the day that should bring him to the scene of his life's work in the Mission of Madura. We have accompanied him on his travels throughout the fifteen years during which, as an apostle, he laboured there. His work without rest and repose was almost feverish. Every moment belonged to the miserable, to whom he was sent.

His natural, chivalrous courage was refined into Christian fortitude, into a supernatural chivalry. When it was question of saving souls, nothing appeared too hard for him, no sacrifice from which he could shudder. The voyages for months on infected, thickly crowded ships; the continual travelling from place to place, which under the scorching rays of the sun he did barefoot over the glistening, burning sand of the plains of Madura; the privations due to the mortified manner of life that a Pandaram-Swami led; the sacrifices caused by flight from persecutors; the ever-menacing danger to life itself......all entailed superhuman suffering which, for the winning of souls, the apostle gladly bore.

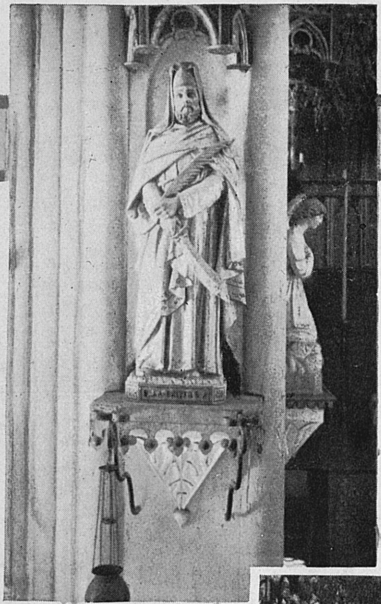
Thus Father de Britto stands before us as a man of clear intelligence, a man of strong will, a man true at heart; an apostle with a love for his Redeemer that forgets itself and surrenders all, even life itself; an apostle burning with zeal for souls, joyous, brave and ready for the hardest sacrifice,.........a second Francis Xavier!

Udayathevar's Tomb.

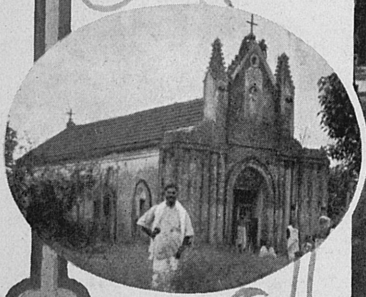




Centre—**Fr. de Britto's prison, Pillur.**
Bottom—**Father de Britto's temple-prison, Oriyur.**



The Martyred Sanniyasi.



Oriyur Chapel. **Oriyur Church.**

The church has been built over the exact spot of the execution while the chapel stands over the mound, on which Father de Britto last prayed.

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

After Death.

Prince Udayarthevar's minister had issued strict orders to keep all those at a distance, who should endeavour to secure for themselves the remains of the martyr. Day and night a number of soldiers were obliged to watch over the place of execution. During the night of the 4th of February and on the two following nights, a mysterious flame flickered over the stake. This was brought to the notice of the minister, who at once gave the order to have the stake pulled up and to let the remains fixed on it lie in the sand. This was done. From the remains a rare fragrance spread all around. Then a downpour of rain forced the soldiers to withdraw from the spot. Wild animals now came and of the remains of the martyr they left only a few bones and the skull.

No sooner did Father Lainez hear of the martyrdom than he left to enter Marava but was earnestly dissuaded therefrom. Both the Christians and the heathens of Marava believed a fresh persecution would set in if he should venture into the State. In consequence he stayed in a village near the border. From there he gave what support was possible to the Christians in Marava and took all pains to obtain possession of the precious treasure of the martyr's remains. To secure these the Christians and especially the catechists were indefatigable. Under various pretexts they came to Oriyur and gathered the skull and the few bones still to be found; they succeeded, too, in getting the stake. Over the scimitar there was greater difficulty. For a long time Perumal Kudumban, the executioner who had dealt the death-blow, did not wish to hand it over. After its use on the neck of Father de Britto, he had washed it in a pond: from that moment the water in the pond turned foul and could not be used any more. Up to the present day it has been abandoned and is still pointed out as cursed. Perumal believed the scimitar would protect him against being harassed by evil spirits and so did not want to part with it. At length when the Christians offered him a large sum of money, he gave the precious relic to them but kept the hilt. Father Lainez had the scimitar and the remaining relics of the servant of God brought to Pondicherry, to the great joy of Monsieur Martin, the true friend of the martyr. But they were not to be kept there long: they were transferred to the old Saint Paul's college in Goa. It was seeming that thus, where the apostle of India reposed, there also should lie the remains of his zealous follower.

When the news of the martyrdom reached Portugal, it caused no grief but awakened holy enthusiasm and rejoicing. When writing from Lisbon to the General, Father Thyrsus Gonzalez, in October 1694, Father Sarmento, the Procurator of the Province of Goa, says: "The martyrdom of Father de Britto filled the king and the queen and the whole city with the greatest consolation and admiration." No sooner was the glad tidings known to the king than at his bidding Father de Magalhaes requested the mother of the martyr to attend Court. Deeply thankful to God that he had permitted her to see the day of her son's glory, Donna Beatrix went in festive dress from her retirement in Portalegre to Lisbon, where Don Pedro received her at Court with the greatest distinction and congratulated her on the honour of being the mother of a martyr.

Some years later Father John da Costa came to Lisbon as the Procurator of the Malabar Province. By the Superiors of Goa he had been given the scimitar, with which the martyr had been beheaded, and had brought it with him to Portugal in a scabbard wrought in filigree work. He presented it to Don Pedro as a remembrance. Full of reverence the king received the scimitar in his hands and kissed it; all who were present followed his example. But Don Pedro preferred not to keep it. "To you," he said, "to the Brethren of the martyr it is better entrusted; for, it will be better revered and will instil fresh zeal and apostolic enthusiasm among the younger members of the Order." On this occasion the Count de Marialva remembered the scene enacted at the departure of Father de Britto and with tears in his eyes said: "I do not know whether John has done more to become a martyr than I to prevent it!"

In India the memory of the apostle and martyr was preserved with deep reverence. The Christians of Tanjore and of Marava did not forget their Father but in large numbers pilgrimaged to the spot made sacred through his death. At the outset Prince Udayarthevar and his chief minister, who bore the greatest share in the guilt of Father de Britto's execution, tried by means of mockery and of violence to keep the pilgrims away. But the prince did not long survive the victim of his hate. His nephew, Varugunathathevar, succeeded him in the administration of this part of the realm of Marava and gave full liberty to the Christians. "Let us allow," he declared, "these good people to come to the spot where the great man has suffered death for his faith." As the martyr died on the Ash-Wednesday of 1693, frequently more than a thousand pilgrims gathered on Wednesdays at Oriyur to pray on the mound, the site of the martyrdom, and to lay their requests before their Father.

The Annual Letters of the year 1735 speak of a pilgrimage that a Christian prince of the royal family of Marava made to Oriyur.(1) He had been ailing for long and all the remedies, he had resorted to, had proved unavailing. He prayed on the spot of martyrdom and his trust in the martyr brought him complete recovery. With his own hands he carried the bricks for the building of a church there. A few months later he forgot the promises, he had made the martyr, and relapsed again into his sickness. But what was worse, he allowed a sorcerer to try to cure him, denied his faith and to recover his health became an idolator once more and took to superstitious practices. His condition worsened every day. Once again he prayed to Father de Britto, repented of his deep fall, and devoutly received the sacrament of penance and immediately felt better. His wife, a daughter of Vijayar Ragunatha, nephew of the Raja Rangunathathevar, had been for three years a Christian and she had offered herself to God as a victim of expiation for her faithless husband. (2) God had heard her prayer.

We often read in the letters of missionaries of those and later times that in their petitions the Christians turned no less to Father de Britto than they did to Saint Francis Xavier. Father de Rossi, who from 1736 to 1774 had laboured for thirty-eight years most successfully in the Madura Mission and especially in Marava, makes frequent mention in his letters of the fact that, in order to comfort the Christians and bring the heathen to the Faith, God had made use of many a miracle, which He wrought at the intercession of our Lady of Sorrows, or of St. James, of St. Joseph, of the venerable John de Britto and especially of Saint Francis Xavier. It may suffice to bring to notice those miracles, which in 1728 Father Beschi records in his well-known book, the Veda Vilakkam. They were so accredited that this famous missionary set them forth as proofs for the truth of the Catholic Faith against the Lutheran missionaries of Tranquebar, who at that time strove to make their way into Tanjore.

1. At the moment when Father de Britto suffered martyrdom, he appeared to his trusted friend, Father John da Costa, who was staying at Talai, a few days' journey south of Oriyur. Clear and unmistakeably he saw the martyr stand before him and holding his head in his hand. Father da Costa immediately called for his catechist and told him what he had seen and added he was convinced that Father de Britto had just been beheaded for the Faith.

(1) Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 250.

(2) Perhaps Tiruvaluvathevar, who is mentioned further down.

2. Ignatius Polla, a Christian of the Pallar caste, was seriously ill and had been given up by the doctors. Without uttering a word, without any movement, without even the beating of his pulse he lay as though dead. His parents wanted to remove him from Pulial, where he lay, to their own village to be able to inter him when dead in the burial place of their caste. Having carried him as far as Oriyur, they went to the mound of the martyrdom, laid the patient on the ground and besought the martyr to save their son for them. They had not even finished their prayer when Ignatius raised himself up and, to the joy of all, quite cured he threw himself upon his knees to join with his parents in thanksgiving to God for his healing.

3. In the year 1722, a little boy, the son of a rich man, who lived at Tripalakudi, met with sudden cure. From birth the child had been lame and crippled. His parents had hardly ventured to pray for his healing, so impossible did it appear to them. The mother fell ill. Father de Britto was appealed to and she was cured. Father and mother then made a pilgrimage to Oriyur to thank their benefactor. On this occasion they felt themselves stirred to recommend their lame child to the martyr. When they returned home, they found the little one sound and whole. While they had prayed at Oriyur, the boy had raised himself from his bed and without any difficulty could get about and run.

4. Father Beschi also records the cure of a leprous woman, who had reached such a stage that nobody wanted to approach her any more. Decomposition had attacked all her limbs and the tips of the fingers and the toes had fallen off. Having been brought to Oriyur she suddenly grew completely cured and could return on foot to her village home.

5. From birth onwards a child belonging to a Christian family suffered from a peculiar eye-complaint. In place of the pupil and the eye-lids there grew white, cartilaginous flesh. The unhappy parents recommended the child to the martyr and implored of him to obtain for the unfortunate child the use of at-least one eye. Their trustful prayer was heard ; the left eye was immediately cured while the right remained in its former condition.

6. As a last instance another miracle may find mention here. A prominent heathen of Tottiam was sick. He sent for Separi, a catechist, and asked for a certain remedy. Separi gave him the medicine he wanted but at the same time made use of the opportunity to converse with him about eternal salvation and the true religion. After listening to him the heathen said : "How can thy

religion be true and holy, since the Raja of Marava has put to a disgraceful death the apostle of thy religion and has forbidden the preaching of that religion in his dominion ? " The catechist replied : "Just the death of the apostle is a clear proof for the truth and the holiness of our religion ! The guru, who made it known, prized it higher than his life !" This answer made an impression on the heathen, who now wished to hear more about Christian doctrine. Then he promised to be converted and to receive baptism if, through the intercession of that apostle, he should enjoy health within twenty-four hours. Returning home the catechist spent the night in prayer to the martyr. When he visited the sick man the next morning, he found him quite well and prepared to accept the true Faith.

In spite of the severest persecution after the martyrdom of Father de Britto, Christianity did not perish in Marava but spread ever wider. We have reason to call this fact another extraordinary miracle. Father Lainez, who immediately took up the work, which Father de Britto had been engaged in, kept himself hidden in order to avoid stirring the tyrant Rangunathathevar further against the Christians, and lived closed to the frontier of the State. But he could not devote himself wholly to the Maravars, for, as Superior, he had other duties besides. Only later, when the fury of the persecution had somewhat abated, was he able to make his way into Marava and to work there for some years. During the period of persecution many a Christian left alone had grown unfaithful ; of these he probably brought back the majority to the Church and also baptised a large number of heathens. About him in a letter of the 2nd of November, 1701, Father Luiz Fernandez says that within twenty months Father Lainez had reconciled seven thousand apostates to the Church and had baptised nine thousand pagans.(1) In 1703 Father Lainez went to the forests between Marava and Tanjore where he freely exercised his ministry. Early in 1704, the governor of a town in Marava sent two parties of soldiers to arrest him on the border. With four catechists he was seized, beaten and insulted and led to the governor. But a threatening letter from the Prince of Tanjore, whose territory had been violated by the arrest, forced the governor to release the prisoners. Father Franco says Father Lainez was on the point of being put to death.(2).

In the same year Father Borghese, the old friend of Father de Britto, succeeded Father Lainez and laboured in Marava amid

(1) Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 233.
(2) Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 233.

indescribable hardships up to 1708. With the sole help of some catechists it was far too difficult for one priest to take care of a field of labour, for which his successor, Father Martin, declared five missionaries would hardly have sufficed.(1) In consequence it is easily understood how, as Father Borghese remarks, in many places superstitious practices crept in again among the Christians. Nevertheless the Faith spread further and further. Father Martin, who replaced Father Borghese in 1709, found in Marava, amid a population of a million, twenty thousand of the Faithful. During his first years there he was able to baptise four thousand more. He writes : "The death of the shepherd at first brought cruel persecution upon the flock ; but for some years now we have had peace, and the Mission of Marava is at present one of the most flourishing in India !" (2).

In 1710, Rangunathathevar the Raja of Marava died at the age of eighty. His successor, Vijayar Ragunatha, did not oppose the work of Father Martin but allowed him to build a church within his realm. This favourable disposition of the Raja did not last long. On the 15th of August 1711, owing to ridicule having been poured out upon pagan superstition by some Christians, he began a persecution, threw Father Martin into prison at Kalaiyarkoil, tortured two of his catechists and destroyed the church and residence at Ponnelikoottai. Two months later Father Martin was released and ordered to leave the realm. Some of his catechists, however, appealed to Varugunathathevar, the elder brother of the Raja, and ruler over half of Marava. He invited Father Martin to his Court at Arantangui. There Father Martin was very honourably received and was permitted to continue his apostolic work. But his health had been undermined, and in 1712 he was replaced by Father Capelli. (3)

During the next few years the Mission of Madura was tried more sorely than before. Vijayar Ragunatha was very superstitious and a fervent idolator. While on a visit to the famous temple of Rameswaram he was about to take his ceremonial bath in the tank before the temple, when he noticed that some soldiers did not perform the same ceremony he was engaged in. On enquiring from the Brahmins around him he was told the soldiers were Christians, who mocked at the worship of Rama and made him a butt of their raillery. To prove the truth of what they said, they requested Vija-

(1) Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, iv, 186.
(2) Lettres édifiantes, VI, 383, Lyons 1819.
(3) Besse, etc. p. 235—6.

yar to send one of their number to the soldiers with ashes dedicated to Shiva. A Brahmin was ordered to go and on reaching the soldiers offered them the ashes but these informed him their foreheads were besmeared with blessed ashes and that they would have nothing to do with Shiva. The Brahmin, however, insisted ; and then one of the soldiers took some of the proffered ashes and spread a little over his thigh and the rest he threw to the ground and stamped upon. The Raja was enraged. Before he left Rameswaram, news was brought to him that his brother-in-law Tiruvaluvathevar, who was a Christian and was left in charge of the government of Marava during the absence of the Raja, had gone to church and had received the sacraments despite the Raja's express orders not to do so. Vijayar Ragunatha was exasperated. On his return to Ramnad, his capital, he ordered Tiruvaluvathevar to deny his faith. The latter refused and was cast into prison with the threat of the loss of his possessions and even of his life. Unhappily, somebody professing to be a Christian persuaded Tiruvaluvathevar that he would not go against his conscience, if he should renounce Christianity outwardly while still faithful at heart. Tiruvaluvathevar followed the ill-advice. Had he but remained steadfast a little longer, Vijayar Ragunatha would have given way. Ten Christians, who were at the head of troops, were preparing to rescue him from prison. But his lapse prevented their taking any action. It opened the door to bitter persecution of the Church. One means resorted to by Vijayar Ragunatha to uproot the Faith in Marava was to fix a day on which all Christians, under pain of loss of all their goods and of ill-treatment, had to offer before their doors sacrifice to Shiva. A large number outwardly conformed to the order ; many others refused and had their ears and noses cut off ; many went into voluntary exile. Tiruvaluvathevar repented later on and was reconciled to the Church. In the meanwhile, Father Capelli endeavoured to see the Raja in person and to upbraid him for his injustice. But his Superiors disapproved of the attempt and told him to leave Marava for the time being (1).

War, famine and persecution so hindered his successors that from 1722 to 1730 no missionary was in charge of Marava ; but in 1730 a change for the better set in. Four years previously Kattathevar, the then Raja of Marava, had sought the assistance of the Raja of Madura against the Raja of Tanjore, who had conquered his realm. While Kattathevar was at Trichinopoly, Father Bertoldi, who was stationed there, called to see him and consoled him

(1) Bertrand, La Mission du Maduré, IV, p. 233 seq.

very much in his despondency and distress. As a seer, who read the future, Father Bertoldi said: "God, Who has given you the right to the throne, will place you on it again!" His words proved true. Kattathevar then invited him to his capital at Ramnad and showered the greatest honours upon him. Christianity was again allowed to develop in Marava, ([1]).

During the next twenty years the number of baptisms was yearly over a thousand but from 1757 the records fail. One of the last Jesuit missionaries in Marava was Father Thomas de Rossi, who from the year 1734 until his death in 1774, held out tirelessly upon this toilsome field of labour. Then followed the suppression of the Society of Jesus and with that there resulted a long cessation of missionary work. One or the other Goan secular priest and some catechists were able to preserve a remnant of what the Jesuit missionaries had built up during more than a hundred years of apostolic activity.

([1]) Lettre annuelle de 1730; see Besse, La Mission du Maduré, p. 242-46.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

Raised to the Altar.

Immediately after the death of Father de Britto a beginning was made in India with the preliminary steps necessary for Beatification. His lordship, Monsignor Gaspar Alfonso, then Bishop of Mylapore and formerly, as the Provincial of the Malabar Province, Father de Britto's Superior, gathered together in the year after the martyr's death depositions about the saintly life and the miracles wrought through the intercession of Father de Britto. Forty witnesses made their declaration. All of them had either personally seen and heard what they recorded or had shared his sufferings in prison. The Archbishop of Goa and the Bishop of Cochin also examined a number of Indians and of Portuguese, who had become acquainted with Father de Britto either on his voyages to and from India or while he was in Goa or elsewhere. When Father da Costa came to Rome in 1699 as the Procurator of the Malabar Province, the Cardinal Vicar requested to see him and received from him the declarations concerning the life and martyrdom of his friend. All these testimonies were forwarded to the Congregation of Rites and proved to satisfaction that the renown of Father de Britto's saintliness was grounded, and that it was the general conviction that he had died as a martyr for the Faith.

From various quarters letters, with petitions to proceed to the Beatification, reached Pope Innocent XIII. Monsignor Lainez, whom we know as the co-worker and friend of Father de Britto's, was now the Bishop of Mylapore and on the 23rd of February, 1713, wrote to the Holy Father: "The Church in India, in order to hold herself up against the persecutions, which the blind hate of the heathens always kindles afresh, is in need of the protection of the Church triumphant and of those, especially, who in life taught her Faith. In my diocese the memory of the virtues of the venerable John de Britto has kept itself alive. The diocese entrusted to me holds him in honour as a glorious martyr of Jesus Christ. His zeal in the promulgation of the Gospel, his journeys, the labours which he underwent for his Christians, the numerous conversions which he brought about among the heathens, aroused hatred among the Brahmins of such sort that they had him thrown into prison. Out of hatred for the Faith the Raja of Marava condemned him to death and had him beheaded. All our Christians are convinced that he surrendered his life for the Faith. Since the day, on which

he suffered death, and because of what that death was, they honour him as a martyr. Furthermore, to prevent the remains of the champion of Christ from falling into the hands of the heathens some Christians at the risk of their lives ventured to secure them. They delivered them to me that I might guard them as a precious boon till the day, when the Holy See should permit of public veneration to the martyr. Father de Britto can be ranked as well among the Confessors as among the Martyrs. Of one thing I may still assure Your Holiness that, in consequence of numerous miracles wrought by God at his intercession, the fame of his saintly life and of his martyrdom spreads abroad further and further. The Christians of these large dominions unite themselves in the desire that Your Holiness would solemnly admit the venerable John de Britto among the number of holy Martyrs; he has shed his blood in profession of the Catholic Faith, and has thus made himself deserve well of the Church in the Madura Mission and throughout the whole world. My Christians have deputed me to make known their yearning desire. As their shepherd and as the co-worker and friend of the venerable martyr, I unite my petition to theirs that the great missionary and martyr be accorded public veneration as a Blessed of the Church. I was formerly occupied as a lowly, missionary in Madura. Through this Mission I have travelled for years and, more than once, have endured imprisonment, borne fetters and gone through other sufferings in honour of our holy Faith. Well may I hope Your Holiness will not refuse my and my flock's petitions!"

On the 7th of December the Archbishop of Braga, a friend in youth of Father de Britto, writes to Rome: "I have known John de Britto from childhood on; as pages of Don Pedro, my present king and lord, we were together at the royal Court. Already then we marvelled at his angelic innocence; in all he did, he showed great matureness and perfection." Another letter written by the Bishop of Cranganore says: "All the countries in the East Indies commemorate the name of the venerable John de Britto and the martyrdom that, a few years ago, he suffered at the order of the Raja of Marava for the profession of the Catholic Faith. Every day the renown of his virtues and of the miracles, with which God seals and rewards the merits of his servant, rises higher. Numerous witnesses affirm that John de Britto, the servant of God, courageously made known the Gospel in the realm of Marava and has converted a multitude from idolatry, and through the waters of regeneration has added them to the membership of the Church; they testify that thereby he drew upon himself the hatred of the Raja and of the

Brahmins; that the Raja cast him into prison, overwhelmed him with insults, inflicted torture and, finally, had his head, hands and feet cut off. Through their depositions it is proved that, before the carrying out of the sentence of death, the Father was twice pressed to offer sacrifice to the gods and that he resolutely rejected the demand. He persevered till his last breath in the profession of the Faith and went joyously to death. His whole life was saintly; splendid qualities revealed themselves: a zeal for souls worthy of an apostle; a chivalrous spirit of sacrifice that quailed before no danger; a self-denial far beyond the ordinary; a humbleness that preferred the Cross and the obscureness of mission-life to the prestige of a royal Court; a love of God that was ready to sacrifice life itself. Numerous, too, are the miracles with which God glorifies His servant. Through his intercession some have received eye-sight, which either they had never previously possessed or had lost; others have recovered health when they were near death; others have been strengthened in their Faith by the martyr appearing to them. Even heathens contribute their testimony to his glory and openly say that during three successive nights they saw a brilliant flame hovering above the stake, upon which his corpse hung."

Other Bishops added their petitions. Both King John V of Portugal and his consort, Queen Maria Anna, wrote their own requests to Innocent XIII. When the Holy See had decided upon commencing with the cause of Beatification, it charged the Congregation of Rites to present through the Bishop of Cranganore and the Bishop of Mylapore a general enquiry into the life of Father de Britto, his martyrdom and the miracles, that through him had been wrought by God. At the same time it had to be shown that no public veneration had been accorded him. The reports of these Bishops proved satisfying. Later on at a meeting of the Congregation of Rites, it was asked whether the observance on the part of the Father of the so-called 'Malabar Rites' did not stand in the way of Beatification. By these rites were understood certain practices, which the missionaries of Madura allowed their converts and to which the missionaries themselves conformed, such as fixed ablutions, the wearing of definite marks, the performing of prescribed ceremonies that could easily be considered as superstitious or idolatrous. In the presence of Pope Benedict XIV, the Congregation deliberated on the question in detail and came to the conclusion that the conforming to the observance of these rights did not stand opposed to the Beatification, and that Father de Britto had observed them not out of superstitious motives but for reasons based merely upon their social character.

In the year 1741, the preparatory stages were so far completed that it was now only a matter of the declaration of the Congregation on the martyrdom and on the miracles. But a very considerable obstacle then came in the way. It was at-first the persecution and finally the suppression of the Order, to which Father de Britto belonged. In consequence, the conclusion of the Process of Beatification was adjourned to a more favourable time. More than a hundred years were to elapse, before the matter was again taken up on the 8th of April 1851. In the September of that year and in the presence of Pope Pius IX, the Congregation of Rites declared that the martyrdom of Father de Britto, its causes and the miracles obtained through the martyr's intercession stood above doubt.

Now arose the last question whether, as the matter stood, one could proceed to the Beatification ? This would be decided on the 17th of February 1852. When the day came Pope Pius IX went to the chapel of the Roman College and prayed long before the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed. Then he went into the great hall of the College, where he took his seat surrounded by the Prelates of his Court, by the Superiors of the Society and by many others. The Pro-Secretary of the Congregation of Rites read the Decree, in which the Pope solemnly declared and announced one could with certainty proceed to the Beatification. An Apostolic letter in the form of a Brief would be drawn up and, later on in the Basilica of Saint Peter, the Beatification would be solemnly celebrated. This celebration was postponed to the following year and took place on the 21st of August 1853.

On that day Saint Peter's Basilica was most festively decorated. Throngs of the Faithful filled the great house of God. When the Cardinals and the members of the Congregation of Rites had taken their places, the Brief of Beatification was publicly read ; then followed a solemn Te Deum and High Mass in honour of the Blessed. In the afternoon, His Holiness Pope Pius IX came from his palace of the Quirinal to pay homage to the Blessed. On this occasion the crowd of people, who thronged there, was greater than in the morning. The Pope knelt long in prayer and then received the thanks of the General of the Society of Jesus. [1].

In the capital of the Mission of Madura, where since the year 1838 the members of the Order, to which Blessed John de Britto belonged, were again at work, the Beatification of the great martyr was celebrated in an especial manner at the beginning of the year

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[1] Civiltà Cattolica, 1853, 530.

1854. On the 25th of January, as a preparation for the feast itself, a novena was commenced in the cathedral of Trichinopoly. Before the cathedral, a banner with a representation of the Blessed waved from a tall pole. On an elevated stand in the choir of the cathedral there was placed a statue, which represented the martyr triumphant with the palm of victory in his hand. Every evening a band of musicians went through the streets of the city to draw the notice of all to the novena and to invite all to attend. During the novena the rosary was said ; then an excerpt from the life of the Blessed was read; a sermon followed and, finally, the blessing from the All Holiest closed the service. For the feast-day the cathedral bore its finest decorations. Above the main altar an immense picture occupied the whole length of the choir and produced a splendid effect. It represented three scenes : how the Blessed preached, how he baptised and how he suffered martyrdom. On the eve of the feast there were solemn vespers, after which the Bishop, Monsignor Canoz, presented a relic of the Blessed to be kissed by the Faithful. From an early hour throngs of the Faithful crowded into the cathedral on the feast-day for the Pontifical Mass and to receive holy Communion. It was a Saturday, the 4th of February. Father Mehay, one of the oldest missionaries, arrived from Negapatam to deliver in Tamil the panegyric in honour of the Blessed. In the evening a sapram [1] or procession took place on the spacious grounds around the cathedral. The statues of Blessed John de Britto, of Saint Michael and of the Mother of God were borne around on gorgeously adorned litters to the accompaniment of music, singing and fire-works. Now and then silence fell when a catechist in a loud voice addressed prayer to the Blessed. After Benediction on Sunday and on Monday evening, there was a theatrical performance, during which the life of the man of God from his childhood up to his martyrdom was represented in different scenes.

In the middle of the previous century the outlook in many places of the Madura Mission was very sad. The few Indian priests appointed to the Mission were unable to replace the former Jesuit missionaries. The Catholic population sank into ignorance ; many fell back into paganism ; others became Protestant. Most of the Indian priests did not want to acknowledge the Vicar Apostolic sent by the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and publicly declared themselves opposed to him and against the Apostolic See. Oriyur, the village of the martyrdom of Blessed John de Britto, was in charge of one of these priests. Pilgrims still conti-

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[1] A sapram is strictly speaking a procession, in which temple cars are used and with idols on them are drawn through the streets.

nued to visit the hallowed mound, the site of the martyr's death. But, as a missionary, who lived in Ramnad, regretfully said, these pilgrims in their superstitious practices went almost as far as the heathens did. Better times came when Leo XIII in the year 1886 established a Hierarchy and, through later enactments in 1892, exactly defined the limits of the new dioceses. Oriyur was then attached to the diocese of Mylapore.

In 1734, out of gratefulness for many favours received through the intercession of Blessed John de Britto, Kattathevar, the Raja of Marava, ordered the building of a church at Oriyur. It was to rise upon the place of martyrdom and, while it was being constructed, Tiruvaluvathevar, brother-in-law of the Raja Vijayar Ragunatha and a convert, who had been cured of an ailment, carried bricks upon his shoulders as ordinary coolies did; he has been mentioned in a previous chapter as the husband of a convert princess. Visiting Oriyur in 1854, Father Saint Cyr of the Madura Mission says: "The church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin consists of two parts. The first is a nice rotunda, which serves as a choir. The altar rises on the very spot, where the blessed martyr was beheaded. Father de Rossi, an Italian, built this rotunda about 1770. The second part of the church, which forms a large and fine nave, was constructed about twenty-five years ago by a Goan priest residing at Pulial. Ever since the schism broke out in this country, the gathering of the Faithful at the hillock of the martyrdom of Blessed John de Britto and at the church of Oriyur has diminished considerably. By the side of the church towards the north, there is a sort of tomb. It is there that the Father, after having obtained permission from the chief of the soldiers who were leading him, retired a little apart, knelt down and prayed, before he presented his head to the scimitar. It was there, too, that the stake was planted, to which were attached his head and bleeding members. Pilgrims carry away earth from the tomb, and this earth works marvellous things. Dense groves of trees shade the church and the environs......"(1). This account leads one to conclude that the first church built in 1734 by Kattathevar had been demolished.

On the 16th of November 1932, Father Winiger, S. J., a missionary of the Poona Mission, paid a visit to Oriyur and in a letter he says: "Father Saint Cyr's description practically holds good even now. But over the tomb a chapel has been built. In this chapel, where the stake stood, there is a sort of shrine; in

(1) Cinquante ans au Maduré; Pèlerinage du P. Saint-Cyr à Oriour; 11; Trichinopoly, St. Joseph's College, 1889.

front of this shrine is an altar; from either side of this altar a few narrow steps lead up to the tomb behind. An aperture behind this altar is covered with a nice gilt cover and is used by the sacristan to fetch red earth underneath the tomb for pilgrims, who come there on Wednesdays, now the bazaar day. Both church and chapel are nice; they are not spacious; the church dedicated to Our Lady of Health is on the mound of the martyrdom and can hold about four hundred people; the chapel is erected on the spot, where Blessed John de Britto prayed before he was beheaded and where the stake was planted, on which his body and limbs were impaled; it bears the martyr's Tamil name of Arulanandar Nathar and can contain about two hundred and fifty persons. No priest resides there but it is visited every Wednesday by a priest. Oriyur now belongs to the mission district of Andaveram four miles northwest, and has been under Propaganda jurisdiction since 1928. Outside the grounds of the church and towards the north are mighty trees and the village market-place. There the tomb of Udayarthevar lies. Out of remorse he is said to have chosen this spot for his remains that people might trample upon them for the crime he had committed in putting Father de Britto to death. About half a mile south of Oriyur is a temple dedicated to Shiva and called Perumal kovil. It is now deserted. At the time when Father de Britto came there, it was being built. Large hewn boulders, ready for the building of the temple as they then were, are still strewn about. Tradition says that this temple was used as a prison for Father de Britto and is therefore cursed. About three furlongs farther south in the thick jungle are the ruins of the palace of Udayarthevar. Thorny shrubs grow over them."

In its day the old Mission of Madura had flourished; it is now divided into the Archdiocese of Pondicherry and into the dioceses of Kumbakonam, Mylapore, Coimbatore, Trichinopoly and Tuticorin; it is flourishing again. Within what was the territory of the early mission, the number of Christians is now over five hundred thousand and, in Marava alone, above sixty thousand.

On behalf of his Christians of Marava, Blessed John de Britto continued his work of intercession. From Ramnad, where the Blessed was imprisoned and condemned to death, a missionary wrote: "My predecessor in this field of labour, Father John de Britto, still manifests his power to the children of his Christians." He then proceeds to mention some visible responses to prayer, of which he himself was witness or about which he heard from eye-witnesses. Close to the church of Ramnad was a well about twenty feet deep, which formerly had a supply of water but had now been

dry for years. Pragasi, the nine year old daughter of the catechist, fell into the well. Weeping and in terror her father ran to the spot and full of trust invoked Blessed John de Britto. The child is helped out quite unhurt. Her father is convinced that he owes the life of the child to the Blessed.

Among Indians numerous offspring is held to be a great blessing. Childlessness, on the contrary, is considered as a misfortune and a disgrace. Now in Kilakarai, a few hours distance from Ramnad, two married women had prayed for years in vain for the blessing of children. The thought of making a pilgrimage to Ramnad occurred to them. They went there to lay their petition before Blessed John de Britto and made a vow to present to the church of Kilakarai a lamp made of copper and some jars of oil, in case their prayer met with response. Blessed John de Britto rewarded their trust. On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul in the following year, both came to the priest in charge of Kilakarai and, beaming with joy, showed him the little ones, that they owed to the intercession of the Blessed, and presented their offerings. Their instance does not stand alone.

Epilepsy is a disease widely spread in Marava. The seizure or fits, that it causes, often appear with extraordinary violence. Heathens attribute the disease not to natural causes but to the influence of the devil. At Ramnad, the missionary had engaged a boy as a servant, who proved very alert and upright and looked after all his work to the full satisfaction of his master. His father was dead and his mother had abandoned her children, had become a pagan again and had married one. The boy suffered from epilepsy. One day he had a seizure of the worst kind. On the day after, he came weeping to the missionary and said: "I am lost; who will now employ me?" The missionary consoled him and promised he would always take care of him. The seizures repeated themselves weekly and always more violently than before. Both the missionary and the boy turned for help to Blessed John de Britto. Vows and novenas were made. At first the seizures were renewed but they were no longer so violent; they were also more seldom; then they ceased and the cure was complete. His sister had also suffered for many years from the same disease and now, encouraged by her brother's recovery, she made a vow to the Blessed and she, too, was cured.

With the same unalterable love the apostle of Marava continues to work for the salvation of his children in India. "May he, the great Blessed, who shines forth in the splendour of his virginal innocence and in the glory of a saintly confessor and in the grandeur of an apostle with the martyr's palm of victory, be for us all an

example, which we, each in his own sphere, may follow in our battles, victories and triumph!"(1) In the Brief of the Beatification, dated the 13th of May 1852, Pope Pius IX expressly declares: "We grant the permission that the servant of God, John de Britto, be venerated as blessed in order that the Faithful have a new model of Christian fortitude." And since that day, the Church following the guidance of her eminent leader, Pope Pius IX, has reiterated his prayer: "O Lord, Thou, Who hast strengthened thy blessed martyr, John, with unswerving steadfastness in the spreading of the Catholic Faith in India, grant us through his merits and intercession the grace that we, who celebrate the memory of his triumph, may imitate the example of his faith!" Loyalty to our Faith and fortitude in its profession are needed above all in our days, which are harder for Catholic belief than those of many a century gone by. May the example of our hero, so loyal and courageous in his faith, shine before us and encourage us in the great conflicts of our time!

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(1) Father Pratis, S. J., Sermons for feasts, iii, Innsbruck, 1882, p. 426.

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